

THE DIVINE ART OF LIVING  
'ABDU'L-BAHÁ



# THE DIVINE ART OF LIVING

COMPILED BY  
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FROM THE WRITINGS OF  
'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

FOREWORD BY  
HORACE HOLLEY

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## FOREWORD

This is an age of new and special spiritual significance. Upon every mind there converges a variety of influence representing every stage of past history, and every conceivable aspect of experimental thought on the part of individuals and groups. From the merely mental point of view, the age is one of intensest precipitation and inter-action between different schools of thought, each expressing the spirit of some one definite character or organized way of living, and all invisibly struggling to impress themselves indelibly upon the emerging world consciousness. A war of minds is now in process vastly larger in scope and result than the war of nations so recently left behind.

For the individual, this situation means the responsibility of choosing among conflicting fundamentals, after long racial experience under one or another unanswerable spiritual authority. For society, it means a regrouping of institutional values as inner loyalties must more and more be invoked rather than compelled. All things have been brought to the level of mind, and the general awakening from the attitude of habit to that of conscious volition is releasing enormous energies

both for good and evil which will rapidly alter the character of life throughout the world. The age is one of summation of tendencies established in many environments over long periods, and the amalgamation of new principles from the destruction of every form of cherished exclusiveness and arbitrary domination. The most unassuming soul is not merely witness of but participant in a drama that includes heaven and hell.

The first stage of this mental war is marked by the appearance of a bewildering number of books envisaging the ultimate meaning or use of human life.

Among the frequently miscalled "spiritual" works studied today one may discern three general types: those which offer definite psychological methods for fulfilling personal desires; those which enhance intellect by presenting the universe and human evolution as an exclusively intelligible process; and those which convey wisdom tested by moral victory over the inner and outer perils of existence.

No teaching can carry one farther than the teacher himself has gone. No matter how involved the discourse, the end for the student is to duplicate the teacher's experience and go part way at least along the same road. Materialism is neither wrong nor dangerous until it has been disguised in abstract terms and accepted as a substitute for religion.

Behind the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá there is a life which has been lived through to the end, a life

steadily increasing in significance as it recedes in time. A public character in the true sense of the word, 'Abdu'l-Bahá brought to our own day the renewed vision of that supreme moral victory which like a touchstone differentiates between true and false. Here was a being not merely happy but radiant, though his personal experience plumbed tragic suffering to the depths. Here was mental energy drawn as from an inexhaustible source, yet never used for any personal end. Here was a positive love which admitted no boundaries of class, race or creed—here, finally, was insight able to encompass the problems brought to it by seekers from the four corners of the earth.

The path on which 'Abdu'l-Bahá trod was the knowledge of God. This knowledge seemed in him immediate and innate, a relationship with people and things established before desire arises or observation begins. He opened gates of sympathetic understanding between peoples walled off from one another by conflicting philosophies and sciences as well as by conflicting creeds, racial prejudices or economic oppositions. His words keep those gates open today, and serve as a constant reminder that there is a point of spiritual attainment for every soul whence harmony can be seen in all the apparent oppositions of action and of thought.

'Abdu'l-Bahá will ever be identified with the inward spirit of this universal age—its groping for a world religion; its effort to master nature and es-

tablish humanity upon the laws of mind; its growth toward the flower of unity; its perception that the principle of cooperation is stronger than the individual struggle for existence; its reliance upon universal organization for true freedom; its intensive search for valid spiritual truth; its yearning for higher being.

The present compilation has been admirably selected from those passages in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote or spoke to an intimate few on the nature of the "divine art of living." During the most difficult days of the war, these words brought the spirit of peace to many hearts.

HORACE HOLLEY

## TO LIVE THE LIFE

To live the life is:

To be no cause of grief to any one.

To be kind to all people and to love them with a pure spirit.

Should opposition or injury happen to us, to bear it, to be as kind as ever we can be, and through all, to love the people. Should calamity exist in the greatest degree, to rejoice, for these things are the gifts and favors of God.

To be silent concerning the faults of others, to pray for them, and help them, through kindness, to correct their faults.

To look always at the good and not at the bad. If a man has ten good qualities and one bad one, look at the ten and forget the one. And if a man has ten bad qualities and one good one, to look at the one and forget the ten.

Never to allow ourselves to speak one unkind about another, even though that other be our enemy.

To do all of our deeds in kindness.

To cut our hearts from ourselves and from the world.

To be humble.

To be servants of each other, and to know that we are less than anyone else.

To be as one soul in many bodies; for the more we love each other, the nearer we shall be to God; but to know that our love, our unity, our obedience must not be by confession, but of reality.

To act with cautiousness and wisdom.

To be truthful.

To be hospitable.

To be reverent.

To be a cause of healing for every sick one, a comforter for every sorrowful one, a pleasant water for every thirsty one, a heavenly table for every hungry one, a star to every horizon, a light for every lamp, a herald to every one who yearns for the Kingdom of God.—*'Abdu'l-Bahá*.



twentieth. The deepest wish of many great men was to live in the latter day. . . . In past times people esteemed themselves blessed to live in the same time as one of the saints. How much greater is your privilege! To the people then a candle was given, while to you the sun.

The Spirit resembles a rivulet when the earth fills the soul. Put away the terrestrial and the mighty torrent of living water will rush through your freed body.

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Although the life of the creature is called life, in reality, compared to the life of the children (of the Kingdom) it is not life; on the contrary it is death.

For instance, a mineral substance contains life, but this life compared to the life of the vegetable is death; in like manner the life of the vegetable compared to the life of an animal is death; in like manner the life of human beings compared to the life of the children of the Kingdom is death. As Christ said: "Let the dead bury their dead, because he who is born of the flesh is flesh and he who is born of the spirit is spirit."

Therefore, it is evident that life (in its true sense) is the life of the spirit and that life is the love of God, divine inspiration, spiritual joys and glad tidings of God. Seek, O servant of God, this life until day and night you remain in limitless joy.

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The life of man will at last end in this world. We must all take out of this life some fruit. The tree of one's existence must bear some fruit. If a tree has no fruit you must cut it down and burn it; it would be useless for other purposes.

Question: "'Abdu'l-Bahá, what is the fruit of the human tree?"

"It is the love of God; it is the love of human-kind; it is to wish good for all the people of the earth; it is service to humanity; it is truthfulness and honesty; it is virtues and good morals; it is devotion to God; it is the education of souls; such are the fruits of the human tree. Otherwise it is only wood—nothing else."

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The heart must of necessity be spiritual. A tree *must* be fruitful; it may be very tall, very verdant, but yield no fruits. The fruits of the tree of the human life are the love of God, magnetic, spiritual susceptibilities, heavenly illumination, the knowledge of God, praiseworthy attributes, good morals and conduct. A person whose tree of life produces such fruits is a Bahá'í; otherwise he is of the earth earthy, self-occupied, and following the dictates of his own desires, and is man only by name. As Christ says: "Ye shall know the tree by its fruits."

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If the fruit of the existence of man is not servitude at the threshold of the Almighty I declare by

the living, self-subsistent God that life is death, existence is non-existence, non-being is better than being, pleasure is pain, joy is sorrow, immortality is mortality. In this court we must be humble and meek, active and progressive, wide-awake and thoughtful, true and sincere, noble and good, straightforward and zealous. This is the outcome of life! This is the result of ceaseless endeavor! This is the prize to be won! This is the illumination of the world of humanity! This is the eternal life! This is the sublimity of human nature. This is the heavenly glory! This is the radiant crown of the Kingdom of Abha!

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The world is mortal. In one instant it will pass away; but the principle of ease and tranquillity is the soul which is in the eternal world. Real life is the life of the spirit, while the body has to die when its light has come to an end. Therefore, of what importance is it?

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Know thou, verily, God hath preferred the insight to the sight; because the sight sees the material things, while the insight apprehends the spiritual. The former witnesses the earthly world, while the latter sees the world of the Kingdom. The former's judgment is temporary, while the latter's vision is everlasting. . . .

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## 6 THE DIVINE ART OF LIVING

I hope . . . certain souls may arise who may prove radiant lamps to the world of humanity and a merciful spirit to the phenomenal body; that they may be the cause of the purification of souls and the means of the santification of hearts;—that they may know this mortal world as fleeting shadow and call the rest and repose, the pleasure and blessing, the wealth and sovereignty of the earth the waves of the sea of imagination; that they may arise in such wise to live by the divine teachings and exhortations of (Bahá'u'lláh) as to sparkle like the morning star from the horizon of holiness.

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O my servants! The Ancient Beauty commands: Hasten to the shadow of immortality, nearness and mercy from the shadow of desire, remoteness and heedlessness. Be ye resigned like unto the earth, so that the fragrant, sacred, multicolored myrtles of my knowledge may grow in the soil of existence. Be ye ablaze like unto fire, so that ye may consume thick veils and quicken and immortalize the cold and veiled bodies through the heat of divine love. Be ye pure like unto air so that ye may enter the sacred abode of my friendship.

O servants! If ye be informed of the wonders of my generosity and grace which I have deposited in yourselves ye will certainly be cut from all directions and seeking to know your own selves, which is identical with knowing myself, will find yourselves

independent of all save me and will see the ocean of my providence and the deeps of my beneficence in yourselves, with your outward and inward eye, as manifest and clear as the sun shining from the name of Abha. Do not waste this most wonderful, most holy station, through the promptings of fancy and desire and through the falsehoods of superstition and blindness. Ye are like unto a bird which, with all joy and fragrance, soars with the utmost security in the cheerful air of the Praised One. Then in the (imaginary) hope of grains it inclines toward the mud and water of the earth and, with all eagerness, besmears itself with dust and mire. Then, when it attempts to reascend it finds itself unable and a captive, forasmuch as wings besmeared with water and clay are not capable of flight. At that time that bird of the exalted heaven finds itself a dweller in the mortal earth!

Now, O servants, do not besmear your wings with the mire of heedlessness and imagination and the earth of animosity and rancor so that ye be deprived and prevented from soaring in the sacred heaven of knowledge.

O servants! If ye are possessed of sight, enter the city of seeing. If ye are the people of hearing, step into the land of hearing. And if ye are the possessors of hearts, choose an abode in the fortress of the assured ones so that in these dark days ye may not be veiled from witnessing the lights of the beauty of Abha. . . .

O servants! Inscribe the exhortations of the Spirit with the pen of resignation and the ink of submission and assurance upon the tablet of your heart and turn in every instant lest ye may neglect a single letter thereof, and advance toward the True One with all exertion, turning away from all else save him. For this is the root of the leaf of command grown upon the divine tree. . . . This world is a show without reality and is a non-existence adorned in the form of existence. Do not attach your hearts thereto. Do not sever yourselves from your Creator and be not of those who are heedless.

Truly I say, the world is like unto a mirage which has the shadow of water. Those who are athirst make abundant efforts in its search but when reaching it remain deprived and portionless. Or, it is like unto the image of a loved one which is destitute of life and soul; when the lover reaches it he finds it of no worth and value and finds no gain save great pain and despondency. . . .

(Words of Bahá'u'lláh)

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O Son of Dust! All things in the heavens and in the earth have I ordained for thee except the hearts which I have appointed as a place for the descent of the manifestation of my beauty and glory. . . .

(Bahá'u'lláh)

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The station of man is great if he hold to truth and rectitude and keep firm and steadfast in the commands.

A real man is seen before the Merciful One like unto the heaven; his sight and hearing are the sun and moon and his luminous and shining qualities are the stars; his station is the highest station and his traces are the educators of the world.

(Bahá'u'lláh)

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In the beginning of his life man was in the matrix world. In the world of the matrix he obtained capacity and preparation for this world. The forces and powers necessary for this world he attained there. In this world he needed eyes; he received them, potentially, in the other. He needed ears; therefore he obtained them in the world of the matrix. All the powers he needed in this world he attained potentially in the world of the matrix. In the world of the matrix therefore he was prepared for this world; so that when he came to this world he found that all the necessary forces were ready—all his needs for material sustenance were provided.

Therefore in this world also he must prepare himself and get ready for the life hereafter. That of which he is in need in the world of the Kingdom he must obtain here. Just as he prepared himself by acquiring the forces necessary in this world in the

world of the matrix, so likewise it is necessary that all that is needful in the Kingdom, all the forces of the Kingdom—must be acquired in this world.

What is he in need of in the Kingdom after he is transferred from this world to the other world? That world is a world of sanctity; therefore it is necessary that he acquire sanctity in this world. In that world there is need of radiance; therefore radiance must be acquired in this world. In that world there is need of spirituality. In this world he must acquire spirituality. In that world faith and assurance, the knowledge of God, the love of God, are needed. These he must acquire in this world so that after he ascends from this mortal to that immortal world he shall find that all that is needful in that life eternal is ready for him.

It is self-evident that that world is a world of lights; therefore there is need of illumination. That world is a world of love; hence love of God is needed. That world is a world of perfections; virtues of perfection must be acquired. That world is a world of the breaths of the Holy Spirit and in this world must they be acquired. That world is a world of the life eternal. In this world must he acquire it. But how can he? By what means can he acquire these things? How is he to obtain these merciful powers?

First, through the knowledge of God. Second,—through the love of God. Third,—through faith. Fourth,—through philanthropic deeds. Fifth,—through self-sacrifice. Sixth,—through sev-



erance from this world. Seventh,—through sanctity and holiness. Unless he obtain these forces, unless he attain to these requirements, surely he will be deprived of the life eternal. But if he attains the knowledge of God, becomes ignited through the fire of the love of God, witnesses the great and mighty signs, becomes the cause of love among mankind and lives in the utmost sanctity and holiness, surely he shall attain to second birth, will be baptized with the Holy Spirit and witness the life eternal.

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Praise be to God that Bahá'u'lláh has spread before us the heavenly table upon which one finds every kind of food. There is the food of faith and assurance; the sustenance of divine virtues; the bread of the love of God; the meat of the glad tidings of the kingdom of Abhá; the victuals of severance and detachment; the viands of enkindlement and attraction; the nutriment of sanctity and holiness; the dish of attraction with the fragrances of God; the sustenance of the breaths of the Holy Spirit; the food of eternal life; the nourishment of teaching the cause of God and promulgating the religion of God. In short, one finds on this divine table all kinds of spiritual food which constitutes the real Supper of the Lord.

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The world and its objects are transitory. Phe-

nomena undergo change and transformation but God and his servants remain unalterable and not subject to transmutation. We must attach our hearts to Him if we desire to be eternally happy.

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A material man lets himself be worried and harassed by little things but a spiritual man is always calm and serene under all circumstances.

If a person is confirmed in the accomplishment of the services of the Kingdom, his worldly conditions are of secondary importance. The greatest bestowal that it is possible for a soul to attain in this world is this; that he may spend his life, his forces, his possessions, his body, his heart and his spirit in the path of the service of the Blessed Perfection and that towards the last of his life he may drink the cup of martyrdom. This is indeed the most blessed state, the loftiest pinnacle of perfection!

Is there a greater or more harrowing regret in the world than to spend one's physical energies in the awful road of lust, sinful passions, inordinate desires and the frivolities of the age! No! I declare to God! O how pitiful to watch the last flicker of hope dying out of such a life! Because when the last curtain falls on such a dissipated life he finds to his utter remorse his nerves racked, his resources drained, his fortune wrecked, his hopes unfulfilled, his opportunities lost, his visions unac-

complished, his energies wasted and the light of his spirit extinguished! What were the results of these deeds? What was the sum total of these thoughts? What was the outcome of this sowing of wild oats? Where is the man with his youthful ambitions? In what heap of mud and water did he throw the brilliant gems of his ideals? What has he done with his God-given intelligence? He has indeed lived a fruitless life, surrounded himself with the suggestions of passions and the gratification of selfish appetites. His life is brought to a tragic close, enveloped with regrets, remorse! Verily this is the most evident loss!

But, on the other hand, how glorious is the life of a person when toward the last days of his earthly existence he is able to contemplate with great satisfaction that, praise be to God, through the assistance of the Almighty, he has been fortunate and given his belongings, his life, his spirit, his body and all his faculties in the path of the love of God, accepting all manner of persecutions, revilings and afflictions with serenity of consciousness and standing firm in the Cause till his very last breath. . . .

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While we were living in Bagdad one of the most honorable men in Persia came there. He called on Bahá'u'lláh and as he used to come and see us often I became attached to him. I grew to love him very much and as he was not a believer I spoke to him about the Cause, I used to tell him:

"My friend, the aim of this life is not the acquirement of wealth, honor and glory, not the display of the animal attributes such as eating, sleeping and chasing worldly pleasures. Such aimless and insipid pursuits do not befit man who is endowed with divine effulgence and radiant longings. The object of this life is the attainment of the spirit, the manifestation of the fear of God, the attainment of the knowledge of God, the acquisition of the love of God, the attaining the good pleasure of the Lord of mankind. If man characterizes himself with these God-like attributes he will become freed from all ties of this mortal world, the light of God will shine in his heart, he will hear the voice of the heavenly angels, he will be surrounded by the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, he will become an irradiating center of the perfect names and qualities of the Merciful and a light through which the darkness of the world of humanity is dispelled!"

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When a man is thirsty he drinks water. When he is hungry he eats food. But if a man be not thirsty, water gives him no pleasure and if his hunger be already satisfied, food is distasteful to him.

This is not so with spiritual enjoyments. Spiritual enjoyments bring always joy. The love of God brings endless happiness. These are joys in themselves and not alleviations. The life of animals is more simple than that of man. Animals have all their needs supplied for them. All the grasses of

the meadows are free to them. The birds build their nests in the branching trees and the palaces of kings are not so beautiful. If earthly needs are all then the animals are better supplied than man. But man has another food, the heavenly manna of the knowledge of God. All the divine prophets and Manifestations appeared in the world that this heavenly manna might be given to man. This is the food which fosters spiritual growth and strength and causes pure illumination in the souls of men. They become filled with the breaths of the Holy Spirit. They increase in the knowledge of God and in those virtues which belong to the world of humanity. They attain to the very image and likeness of God.

What greater joy is there than this? When they invoke God's favor at the divine threshold their minds become open, they enter into spiritual pleasures and make discoveries. By this they enjoy ecstasies of the Spirit and see the world illumined. They are filled with insight. They become fully attuned to the bounties of God and see them face to face, acquiring in themselves the virtues of the Manifestations. Thus it is that man shall attain to the utmost hopes of the holy ones and the saints.

If man could not attain to this illumination and these bounties the mineral world would be better than he for it is not deficient in anything. When man is deprived of the illumination of God he feels a lack and a shortcoming on his part.

God created in us a divine holy spirit,—the hu-

man spirit with its intellectual powers which are above the powers of nature. By this he enjoys the ecstasies of the spirit and sees the world illumined. The tree and the stone have not this power; they have no mind or soul; therefore they are excused. We are not excused. This power gives man effectual control over nature. He is enabled to discover reality and bring invisible things into the courts of the visible. Thus he is enabled to render effective the will of God and give it material station. This is what is meant by Bahá'u'lláh when he said, "Verily we have created thee rich, why have ye made yourselves poor?" And Jesus Christ, when he said, "The Father is in me and I in you." It was this power which through Bahá'u'lláh said, "Noble have I created you, why do ye degrade yourselves?" This power distinguishes you above all other creatures, why do you devote it only to your material conditions? This is that which should be used for the acquisition and manifestation of the bounties of God, that ye may establish the kingdom of God among men and attain to happiness in both worlds, the visible and the invisible.

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Asked, "How could a man who does not know God feel it a punishment to be without that knowledge?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered:

"No man can be happy without God, though he may not know why he is miserable."

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The soul of man must be happy, no matter where he is. One must attain to that condition of inward beatitude and peace, then outward circumstances will not alter his spiritual calmness and joyousness. No one can imagine a worse place than the barracks of Acca. The climate was bad, the water was no better. The surroundings were filthy and dirty, the treatment of the officials was unbearable and we were looked upon as the enemies of religion and corruptors of morals. The government had given an order that during our stay in Acca no one must talk with us and we must not talk with each other. Having arrived in Acca they found there were not enough rooms in the barracks to imprison us separately so they put us all in two rooms with no furniture at all. The court of the barracks had a most gloomy aspect. There were three or four fig trees on the branches of which several ominous owls screeched all night. Every one got sick and there were neither provisions nor medicine. At the entrance of the barracks there was an undertaker's room. It was a horrible room. Yet I lived there two years with the utmost happiness. Up to that period I had not had time to read the Koran from first to last but then I had ample time and used to read this holy book with fervor and enthusiasm. Going over the incidents and events of the lives of former prophets and finding how parallel they were with that of Bahá'u'lláh, I was consoled and encouraged. I would read for instance the following verse: "How thoughtless are the people! When-

ever a prophet is sent to them they either ridicule him or persecute him." And then I would read this verse, "Verily, our host is victorious over them."

I was very happy all the time because I was a free man. Shut off in that room my spirit traveled throughout the immensity of space. At night I went on the roof and communed with the countless stars. What a divine feast! What a heavenly procession! What a spiritual freedom! What beatific bliss! What celestial sovereignty!

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God has given man a heart and the heart must have some attachment. We have proved that nothing is completely worthy of our heart's devotion save reality, for all else is destined to perish. Therefore the heart is never at rest and never finds real joy and happiness until it attaches itself to the eternal. How foolish the bird that builds its nest in a tree that may perish when it could build its nest in an ever-verdant garden of paradise!

Man must attach himself to an infinite reality so that his glory, his joy and his progress may be infinite. Only the spirit is real; everything else is as shadow. All bodies are disintegrated in the end; only reality subsists. All physical perfections come to an end; but the divine virtues are infinite. How many kings have flourished in luxury and in a brief moment all has disappeared! Their glory and their honor are forgotten. Where are the sovereigns now? But those who have been servants of



the divine beauty are never forgotten. The result of their works is everywhere visible. What king is there of two thousand years ago whose kingdom has lived in the hearts? But those disciples who were devoted to God, poor people who had neither fortune nor position, are to-day trees bearing fruit. Their banner is raised higher every day.

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The world needs more happiness and illumination. The star of happiness is in every heart; we must remove the clouds so that it may twinkle radiantly. Happiness is an internal condition. When it is once established man will ascend to the supreme heights of bliss. A truly happy man will not be subject to the shifting eventualities of time. Like unto an eternal king he will sit upon the throne of fixed realities. He will be impervious to outward, changing circumstances and through his deeds and actions he will impart happiness to others. A Bahá'i must be happy for the blessings of God are bestowed upon him.

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Know thou that there are two kinds of happiness—spiritual and material.

As to material happiness, it never exists; nay, is but imagination, an image reflected in mirrors, a specter and shadow. Consider the nature of material happiness. It is something which but slightly removes one's afflictions; yet the people imagine it

to be joy, delight, exultation and blessing. All the material blessings, including food, drink, etc., tend only to allay thirst, hunger and fatigue. They bestow no delights on the mind or pleasure on the soul; nay, they furnish only the bodily wants. So this kind of happiness has no real existence.

As to spiritual happiness, this is the true basis of the life of man because life is created for happiness, not for sorrow; for pleasure, not for grief. Happiness is life; sorrow is death. Spiritual happiness is life eternal. This is a light which is not followed by darkness. This is an honor which is not followed by shame. This is a life that is not followed by death. This is an existence that is not followed by annihilation. This great blessing and precious gift is obtained by man only through the guidance of God.

Spiritual happiness is light, while sorrow is darkness.

This happiness is glad-tidings, while sorrow is disappointment.

This happiness is the Kingdom, while sorrow is the earthly world.

This happiness is life, while sorrow is non-existence.

This happiness is the fundamental basis from which man is created, worlds are originated, the contingent beings have existence and the world of God appears like unto the appearance of the sun at mid-day.

This happiness is but the love of God.

This happiness is but the eternal might the brilliant traces of which are shining forth unto the temples of unity.

Were it not for this happiness the world of existence would not have been created.

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Thy letter was received, and its perusal imparted happiness impossible to describe. It was an indication of the loftiness of thy nature, the strength of thy effort and the purity of thy intentions. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's happiness is caused by such matters. If the material luxuries of the whole earth were available to 'Abdu'l-Bahá he would not think for one moment there was such a thing as comfort and luxury in the world. But when a soul-perfuming fragrance is wafted from the rose-garden of the hearts of the friends to the nostrils of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, such joy is realized that involuntarily I render thanksgiving unto the Blessed Perfection who has trained such servants.

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O my brother, when a seeker intends to turn the step of search and journeying into the path of the knowledge of the King of Pre-existence, he must first cleanse and purify the heart—which is the place of the appearance and emanation of the splendor of the hidden mysteries of divinity—and he must cleanse and refine his breast—which is the throne for the accession and establishment of the love of

the eternal Beloved—from all gloomy dusts of acquired learnings and from the allusions of satanic appearances. He must likewise sanctify his heart from attachment to water and clay—that is, from all phantasmal forms and spectral images—in such manner that no trace of love or hatred may remain in the heart, lest that love may cause him to incline toward a direction, without guide, or that hatred prevent him from turning in another direction, just as in this day most are bereft of the immortal Face and of the threshold of meanings because of these two tendencies and are grazing shepherdless in the deserts of error and oblivion. He should at all times trust in God and turn away from the creatures; be severed and detached from the world of dust and united with the Lord of Lords; not preferring his own self before any one but cleansing the tablet of his heart from pride and vain-glory; attaching the heart to patience and self-restraint; observing silence and avoiding useless speech; for the tongue is a smoldering fire and loquacity is a deadly poison. Material fire devours bodies, but the fire of the tongue consumes souls and minds. The effect of the former vanishes in an hour but the latter continues for a century.

He should consider backbiting as error and never step into that court, for backbiting extinguishes the brilliant light of the heart and numbs the life of the soul. He should be content with little and free from avarice; profiting by the companionship of the severed ones and regarding seclusion from haughty

and worldly people as a benefit. At dawn he should be engaged in commemorations, seeking for that Beloved One with the utmost earnestness and power; consuming heedlessness with the fire of love and praise; passing over all else save God with the swiftness of lightning; bestowing a portion upon the destitute and not refusing benevolence and favor to the unfortunate. He should show kindness to the animals; how much more to mankind (especially) to the people of the Beyan; refusing not his life for the Beloved and turning not away from the True One when reproached by the creatures. He should not wish for others what he doth not wish for himself nor say that which he will not fulfill; keeping aloof from evildoers with all determination and asking the forgiveness of God in their behalf; condoning the sinners and despising them not for the end is not known. Many a sinner who is favored with the essence of faith at the time of death drinks the wine of immortality and hastens to the Supreme Concourse; while many a believing and obedient one is estranged at the time of the soul's departure and dwells in the lowest abyss of fire. In a word the traveler and seeker should consider all else save God mortal and account all but the Adored One as nothing.

These conditions form the attributes of the lofty ones and nature of the spiritual ones. This hath already been mentioned concerning the requirements of the striver and the conduct of travelers in the highways of positive knowledge. When these con-

ditions are realized in a sincere seeker and an unrestrained traveler then the term "striver" becomes true concerning him. When he is confirmed in the performance of "those who strive in us," he will surely enjoy the glad tidings of "We will direct them into our ways."

When the lamp of search, effort, longing, fervor, love, rapture, attraction and devotion is enkindled in the heart and the breeze of love blows forth from the direction of Unity the darkness of error, doubt and uncertainty will be dispelled and the lights of knowledge and assurance will encompass all the pillars of existence. Then the ideal herald will dawn as the true morn from the divine city with spiritual glad tidings and awaken the heart, soul and spirit from the sleep of negligence with the trumpet of knowledge. Then the favors and confirmations of the eternal Holy Spirit will impart such a new life that one will find himself the possessor of a new eye, a new ear, a new heart and a new mind and will direct his attention to the clear, universal signs and to the hidden individual secrets.

(Bahá'u'lláh)

## CHAPTER II

### SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF DIVINE SOULS

**W**ALK, while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not. He that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light believe in the light that ye may become sons of light.

(John 12:35-36.)

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I beg of God that the divine light that is spoken of in John, in the twelfth chapter, may shed its rays upon thee forever, so that thou mayst always be in light. The life of man in this world is short and will soon draw to an end; consequently one must appreciate every moment of his life, exerting himself in that which is conducive to eternal glory.

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The sun is the utmost effulgence but the surface turned toward it must be a mirror. The clearer it is the more light shall be reflected therein.

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Spirituality is the possession of a good, a pure heart. When the heart is pure the Spirit enters

and our growth is natural and assured. Every one is better informed of the condition of his own soul than of the soul of others. Our responsibility to God increases with our years.

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When the spirit is confirmed and assisted by the confirmation of the Holy Spirit then it will show its effect in every condition of the world of existence.

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Unless man maketh spiritual progress in the world of spirit, intellect and heart he cannot gather universal results from material advancements.

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The spiritual life is symbolized by simplicity and contemplation combined with usefulness and well-guided activity.

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Question: What can I do to become the real servant of God?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Live* thou in accord with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Do not only read them. There is a vast difference between the soul who merely reads the words of Bahá'u'lláh and the one who tries to live them. Read thou the *Hidden Words*. Ponder over their meanings and embody the behests into thy life. All that I might say is only one drop of that illimitable sea. My duty is



to explain, to elucidate, to interpret the writings of Bahá'u'lláh. For example: we must investigate the reality; we must show real love to the world of humanity; we must work for the establishment of universal peace; we must sacrifice our lives in the guidance of mankind; we must be kind to all the creatures of God; we must raise the call of the Kingdom; we must characterize ourselves with spiritual characteristics; we must show forth in our words and deeds the attributes of the holy ones.

I declare by him beside whom there is nought else, if we live in accord with one of the teachings we will become radiant like unto this lamp. If we confess verbally that Bahá'u'lláh's principles are the cause of eternal salvation and the means of nearness unto the throne of God and yet do not live according to their instructions we are not Bahá'ís. Therefore day and night we must pray for each other, so that we be assisted to express in our lives the universal spirit of Bahá'u'lláh.

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The cause of God is like unto a college. The believers are like unto the students. The college is founded for the sake of the acquirements of science, arts and literature. If the sciences are not therein and the scholars not educated the object of the college is not achieved. The students must show the results of their study in their deportment and deeds; otherwise they have wasted their lives. Now the friends must so live and conduct them-

selves as to bring greater glory and results to the religion of God. To them the cause of God must be a dynamic force transforming the lives of men and not a question of meetings, committees, futile discussions, unnecessary debates and political wire-pulling.

What is the sum-total and upshot of farming, plowing, sowing the seeds and irrigating? Is there any other thought behind all these labors save the gathering of crops? If the sheaves are only green and verdant but having no grains of wheat or barley the result is not achieved. The aim has been not the luxuriant verdancy of the field but the richness of the harvest. I hope the believers will do their utmost to crown their lives with abundant harvest.

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**Question:** How can one understand the object of his life?

**'Abdu'l-Bahá:** There are two kinds of understanding; objective and subjective. To illustrate: thou seest this glass, or this water and thou dost comprehend in an objective manner their constituent parts. On the other hand, thou canst not see love, intellect, hate, anger, sorrow, but thou dost recognize them in a subjective way through their signs and manifestations. The first is material, the second is spiritual. The first is outward, the second is intuitive. I hope that thou mayst make great

advancement in the second kind of understanding. Turn thy face toward God, and say:

O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit! Purify my heart! Illumine my powers! I lay all my affairs in thy hand. Thou art my guide and my refuge. I will not be sorrowful and grieved any more. I will be a happy and joyful being. O God! I will worry no more. I will not let trouble harass me any longer. I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life. Thou art kinder to me than myself. I dedicate myself to thee, O Lord!

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All things were created for man and man for God. Man is distinguished from all other creations. Man, who is in part animal, possesses all the virtues of the mineral, because he has a body; he possesses the added faculty of the vegetable, growth; he has the virtue of the animal kingdom, sensation; and above all, he possesses reflective and mental power, by which he understands the reality of things. Perceiving and reflecting upon visible things, he realizes the reality of unknown things. When a man gazes at the earth he sees it as if it were level, but by his perception he finds that it is a globe. This power of perception can never be found in the animal kingdom. But man by this power can prove that the sun is a center and that the globe and other bodies revolve around it. This power of judgment, possessed only by man, proves

his excellence; for the virtues and faculties of other things and substances are created by man, and, above all, he is given virtues with which the other kingdoms are not endowed. Everything is for man.

We speak now in examples, as Christ spoke in parables. The world is like a tree; the mineral kingdom is like the root; the vegetable kingdom is like the branches; the animal kingdom is like the blossoms; and man is like unto the fruit of that tree. The tree is but for its fruit. If the gardener did not expect fruit he would never plant trees. In the same way everything is for man.

There are two sides to man. One is divine, the other worldly; one is luminous, the other dark; one is angelic, the other diabolic. Man is equal to the animals in all sensuous conditions, for all animal characteristics exist in him. Likewise, divine and satanic qualities are contained in man; knowledge and ignorance; guidance and error; truth and falsehood; generosity and avarice; inclination towards God and tendency towards Satan; chastity and purity; corruption and vileness; valor and timidity; economy and avidity; good and evil: all are contained in man.

If the angelic side becomes more powerful and the divine power and brightness surround man, then the second birth takes place and eternal life is found at this point. Man becomes the noblest among creatures. On the other hand, if sensuous qualities surround and if terrestrial darkness and sensuous

passions predominate; if they meet in man only the worldly feelings, if they find him a captive of evil qualities and fallen into everlasting death, then such a man is the basest and most abject among all creatures. In such a man divine power does not exist. An animal is not considered unjust and evil because of its cruelty and injustice, for it is not endued, as is man, with divine qualities. But if man falls into the same evil condition it is evident that he has permitted his ungodly attributes to overcome the divine qualities with which he was endowed. This shows the baseness and meanness that exist in human nature.

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The nobility and glory of man consist in the fact that, amidst the beings, he is the dawning-place of righteousness. Can any greater blessing be imagined by man than the consciousness that by divine assistance the means of comfort, peace and prosperity of the human race are in his hands?

No, there is no greater or more complete pleasure or happiness than this. How long then shall we seek our own selfish desires, on the wings of egoism? Senses and inner faculties have been bestowed upon us that we may use them for the good of mankind and that we may become distinguished from the lower nature of man by the solidity and justness of our judgment and that we may continually engage ourselves in well-doing.

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How noble and excellent is man, if he only attain to that state for which he was designed. And how mean and contemptible, if he close his eyes to the public weal, and spend his precious capacities on personal and selfish ends. The greatest happiness lies in the happiness of others.

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He who remaineth idle and indifferent and continueth in his egoism, indulging constantly his carnal appetites, descendeth to the lowest abyss of degradation and ignorance, lower is he than the most dangerous of savage beasts. For it is written, "These indeed are worse than brutes; and meaner than cattle in the sight of God are the deaf and dumb who will not understand."

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They have not yet understood that the greatest glory of man, the universal happiness of the world, consists in the joy of soul, high ambition, good intentions, virtue and chastity.

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Unhappily they imagine that greatness and glory follow on the accumulation of worldly riches and similar vanities. Now clearly consider! If a man gives a thought he will see that the omnipotent God has distinguished him from amongst his creatures by the dress of honor, of virtue and intelligence. . . . Man has become the spring of divine wonders

and the center of the mysteries of the heavenly Kingdom.

Now why should he pollute this pure mantle with the stain of selfish desires and exchange this eternal honor for the lowest depths of baseness? "Dost thou think thy body a small thing, while in thee is enfolded the great universe?"

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By the details which we have already explained we have endeavored to show that the glory, happiness, honor and peace of man do not consist in personal wealth but on the contrary in sublimity of soul, nobility of resolution, extension of education and in the solution of the problem of life. . . . "Verily in the souls of men lieth their only glory."

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There is a great difference between an authentic man and an imitator of one. The former is David himself, the latter is merely the tone of his voice. Knowledge and wisdom, purity and faithfulness and freedom of soul have not been and are not judged by outward appearances and dress.

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Man should be a constant source of well-being and contentment and a ready help to prosperity for multitudes of people.

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We ask, what deeds in the world could be greater than working in the public interests? Can any higher career be imagined than this, that a man should devote himself to the cause of the education, progress, glory and prosperity of the servants of God? It is the greatest of pious deeds that the blessed souls should take them that are powerless by the hands and deliver them from ignorance, degradation and poverty and, filled with sincere purpose for the sake of God, should gird up the loins of their ambition in the service of all people, forgetting their own worldly advantage and striving for the common good. As it is written: "And prefer others over thyself, even though there be poverty amongst them; the best of men are those who do good to their fellows, and the worst are those who do harm to them."

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It is plain and evident that the greatest glory of humanity consists in obeying the omnipotent God, and man's nobility and honor depend upon his following the injunctions and prohibitions of the Lord, the Single One.

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It is quite plain and obvious that the life of this mortal world like the breezes at daybreak is not enduring but passes away. Blessed therefore is the great one who, walking in the path of God's will, shall leave behind him a praiseworthy fame and happy remembrance. "When the pure soul is about



to pass away, what matter whether it dies on a throne or on the surface of dust?"

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As to the seven qualifications of the divinely enlightened soul of which thou hast asked an explanation, it is as follows:

Knowledge. Man must attain the knowledge of God.

Faith.

Steadfastness.

Truthfulness. Truthfulness is the foundation of all the virtues of the world of humanity. Without truthfulness progress and success in all of the worlds of God are impossible for a soul. When this holy attribute is established in man all the other divine qualities will also become realized.

Uprightness. And this is one of the greatest divine attainments.

Fidelity. This is also a beautiful trait of the heavenly man.

Evanescence or humility. That is to say, man must become evanescent in God. Man must forget his own selfish conditions that he may thus arise to the station of sacrifice.

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Blessed is he who is charitable for he shall inherit eternal life.

Blessed is he who overlooks the faults of others for he shall enjoy divine beatitude.

Blessed is he who associates with all with joy and fragrance for he has obeyed the command of Bahá'u'lláh.

Blessed is he who loves mankind for he has heeded the advice of Bahá'u'lláh.

Blessed is he who is kind to his enemies for he has walked in the footsteps of Christ.

Blessed is he who proclaims the doctrine of spiritual brotherhood for he shall be the child of light.

Blessed is he whose heart is tender and compassionate for he will throw stones at no one.

Blessed is he who will speak evil of no one for he hath attained to the good pleasure of the Lord.

Blessed is he who will not uncover the sins of others for he will become favored at the threshold of the Almighty.

Blessed is he who hath a forgiving nature for he will win the spiritual graces of God.

Blessed is he who diffuses only the sweet fragrance of the flowers of friendship and mutual association for he will obtain a goodly portion of the bounties of the Merciful.

Blessed is he who teaches union and concord for he will shine like unto a star in heaven.

Blessed is he who practices loving-kindness and co-operation for he will be encircled with celestial benedictions.

Blessed is he who comforts the downtrodden for he will be the friend of God.

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The believers must be firmly founded in the principles of morality and honesty.

First, in truthfulness. No one should ever tell a lie.

Second, in honesty in all transactions.

Third, forbearance is necessary.

Fourth, the believers must observe the utmost kindness so that all may consider themselves servants of each other and be truthful and honest to all mankind. If they live up to these commandments the confirmations of the Spirit will surely reach them. The Spirit will descend and they will surely make progress.

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From now on you must strive to beautify the moral aspect of your lives. Advise each other with the utmost consideration; watch daily your words and deeds. Thus from the very beginning you may characterize yourselves with divine ideals. The divine ideals are humility, submissiveness, annihilation of self, perfect evanescence, charity and loving-kindness. You must die to self and live in God. You must be exceedingly compassionate to each other and to all the people of the world. Love and serve mankind just for the sake of God and not for anything else. The foundation of your love toward humanity must be spiritual faith and divine assurance. Again: you must be most careful that, God forbid, not one single word contrary to truth issue from your mouths. One false-

hood throws man from the highest station of honor to the lowest abyss of disgrace. Always guard yourselves against this enemy, so that all you state may correspond with reality. Forever supplicate and entreat at the court of Majesty and beg confirmation and assistance. Make ye an effort that you may win the good pleasure of Bahá'u'lláh. All the natural and supernatural advancements in the human world revolve around this one problem. If you attain to this supreme goal all the elements of the world of creation will be ready to serve you at your bidding, i. e., they will find their highest attainment in you and through you or, in other words, you will become the fruits of the world of existence. . . . The evolution of the perfect man is a fruit of creation, just as the evolution of the trunk, branches, leaves and blossoms of the tree is the fruit thereof. Exalt your thoughts. Reflect over all your affairs. Magnify your endeavors. Enlarge the circle of your ideals. Open the wings of spiritual wisdom. Let your hope be the accomplishment of most great deeds the results of which may immortalize your names. All that the people are holding fast to are as the mirage and will not last.

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When a person's life is purely moral, when his daily actions are propelled by ethical forces he will influence tremendously the lives of those who come in touch with him. The insincere man learns from

him the lessons of sincerity, the faithless becomes faithful, the ignorant, wise, and the cowardly, courageous.

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All these wishes are well worthy of asking, especially the rescue from self-love. This is a strange trait and the means of the destruction of many important souls in the world. If man be imbued with all the good qualities, but be selfish, all the other virtues will fade or pass away, and eventually he will grow worse.

I hope the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful will be entirely freed from selfishness. Should this become their nature they will indeed become manifestations of great bounties and the doors of divine grace will open.

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Dissatisfaction with one's self is a sign of progress. The soul who is satisfied with himself is the manifestation of Satan and the person who is not contented with himself is the manifestation of the Clement One. If a person has one thousand good qualities he must not look at them; nay rather, he must strive to find out his own defects and imperfections. For example, a person having a palatial residence furnished with the most expensive furniture and decorated with the most exquisite arts, unquestionably will forget all these adornments as soon as he finds out there is a crack in the wall or

ceiling and without loss of time will set to repair it. On the other hand absolute perfection is unattainable by man. However much a man may advance yet he is imperfect, because there is always a point ahead of him. No sooner does he look up toward that point than he becomes dissatisfied with his own condition and aspires to attain to that. Christ desired to teach us this thing in a concrete manner when some one said, "O thou good Master!" He answered, "Why dost thou call me good? There is one good, and that is God!"

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Praising one's self is the sign of selfishness. Commanding others is not the passport to the realm of spiritual progress. Here is a man who speaks very few words but he is working all the time and attending to all his duties. There is another man who sits down, talks continually, and boasts of his past achievements.

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There are some people who make this short span of life miserable to themselves and others because they harbor envy in their hearts. Envy is the most despicable quality in man. Some people are so filled with it that they cannot bear to see any of their friends receive greater privileges and higher promotions in life than themselves. Like poison envy kills all their nobler sentiments. Envy lowers the station of man and makes him a supreme egoist,

and self-centered. If man extricates himself from the claws of this ignoble monster he has defeated the powers of Satan. Then he will attain tranquility and peace of mind. Man must become evanescent and self-denying. Then all the difficulties and hardships of the world will not touch him. He will become like unto a sea, although on its surface the tempest is raging and the mountainous waves rising, in its depth there is complete calmness.

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To be approved of God alone should be one's aim.

And hast thou realized thy own shortcomings? One must always search for his own shortcomings so that he may repent at the threshold of Oneness and become protected and guarded; otherwise, pride and haughtiness will take possession of one's heart and this will cause deprivation of the bounties of the Court of Singleness.

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Be pure—to be pure is to be selfless.

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Let your word be one, and agree in your opinions, and make your mornings preferable to your evenings and the morrow better than yesterday. The merit of man depends upon his service and perfection and not upon the ornaments of riches and wealth. Let your words be free from falsehood

and lust and your actions sanctified and above suspicion and pure from hypocrisies. Say! Spend not the wealth of your precious lives on lustful desires and do not confine things only to your private interests, but bestow when you have and be patient when you have not. Distress is followed by affluence and confusion by clearness. Shun mendacity and slothfulness and take hold of that whereby the people will be profited, whether young or old, aged or widow.

Say! Beware of sowing the tare of discord among the creatures or the thorns of doubts and suspicion in the pure and brilliant hearts. Say, O beloved of God! Commit not that which will disturb the clearness of the pure water of love or sever the perfumed ties of friendship. By my life, ye are created for love and affection and not for hatred and obstinacy. Boast not of love to your own people, but of love to your fellow-creatures. Glory not in loving your homes, but in loving the whole world.

Let your eye be chaste, your hand faithful, your tongue truthful and your heart instructed. Abase not the glorious station of the learned and do not belittle the honor of the chief men who justly judge among you.

Let equity be your army, reason your arms and forgiveness your character and nature. . . . Regard not the people and their actions, but look to the Truth and his dominion; . . . drink the pure water of pleasure, from the cup of utterance of the



day-spring of the Manifestation, who remembers thee in this strong fort. Spare not any effort within thy power to establish the truth with wisdom and explanations and destroy falsehood from amidst the creatures.

(Words of Bahá'u'lláh)

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If a man commit a transgression he has been unjust to himself, and soon he will find that he is in manifest regret and remorse.

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The thin eyelid prevents the eye from seeing the world and what is contained therein. Then think of the result when the curtain of greed covers the sight of the heart. Say, O people! The darkness of greed and envy obscures the light of the soul as the cloud prevents the penetration of the sun's rays.

(Words of Bahá'u'lláh)

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A thankful person is thankful under all circumstances. A complaining soul complains even if he lives in paradise. . . . If we are not thankful who then can be thankful? Are we not encircled with the bounties of God? Are we not enveloped with the bestowals of the Blessed Perfection? Has he not lighted a luminous lamp in our home? . . . Consider how each one of us is surrounded by his favors! How much divine grace descends upon us!

How often our hearts respond to his call! . . . If we are not pleased then who is there to be pleased?

Verbal thanksgiving is fruitless. Thanksgiving is rendered in two effective ways. First, through the realization of spiritual susceptibilities which illumine the courts of the hearts with the bright stars of happiness and rejoice the heart by the glad-tidings of the Merciful. Second, through deeds, i. e., living in accord with the good pleasure of the Lord; adorning our being with his heavenly attributes and trying to alleviate the suffering and misery of mankind.

If a man does not do these things, even though he praises God and offers him a hundred thousand thanksgivings every second there will be for that man not the slightest result; it will be but words without light. Consequently, we must be very happy, very glad, very much pleased, very contented, very joyful, because we are submerged in the ocean of the bestowals of Bahá'u'lláh. . . . A thoughtful man enjoys the gifts and the blessings of God.

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Afflictions and troubles are due to the state of not being content with what God has ordained for you. If one submits himself to God he is happy.

A man asked another: "In what station are you?" He answered: "In the utmost happiness." "Where does this happiness come from?" He answered: "Because all the existing things move according to my wish; therefore I do not find any-

thing contrary to my desire; thus I have no sorrow. There is no doubt that all the beings move by the will of God, and I have given up my own will, desiring the will of God. Thus my will becomes the will of God, for there is nothing of myself. All are moving by his will, yet they are moving by my will. In this case, I am very happy."

When man surrenders himself everything will move according to his wish.

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Man, as an individual unit of human society, must not base his deeds according to the law of retaliation. He must forgive, just as God forgives the sins and transgressions of his servants.

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Man must be a mine of piety and sympathy. He must associate with all mankind with joy and fragrance. He must not turn away his face from any soul. He must raise the fallen and cheer the hopeless. He must treat with kindness both the friend and the stranger.

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O ye friends of God! Show ye an endeavor that all the nations and communities of the world even the enemies put their trust, assurance and hope in you; that if a person falls into error for a hundred thousand times he may yet turn his face to you hopeful that you will forgive his sins; for he must not

become hopeless, neither grieved nor despondent! This is the conduct and the manner of the people of Bahá'! You should conform your conduct with the advices of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

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May they attain to such heights of altruism as to be ready to sacrifice their lives for each other! This is the life of the world of humanity! This is in accord with the good-pleasure of the Blessed Perfection!

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Man must always associate with those from whom he can get light or be with those to whom he can give light. He must either receive or give instructions; otherwise, being with people without these two intentions, is spending one's time for nothing and by so doing he is neither gaining nor causing people to gain.

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O thou maid-servant! Have great magnanimity so that thou mayest be favored in the threshold of the Almighty. Have lofty aspirations so that thou mayest attain to eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

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It is possible to so adjust one's self to the practice of nobility that its atmosphere surrounds and colors all our acts. When these acts are habitually and conscientiously adjusted to noble standards with no

thought of the words that might herald them then nobility becomes the accent of life. At such a degree of evolution one scarcely needs to try to be good any longer; all our deeds are the distinctive expression of nobility.

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Today the real king is the soul who serves all, and dear is he who exhibits humility toward all humanity. The humbler and lowlier a person shall be the nearer to and more acceptable at the threshold of God is he.

The Beauty of Abha, Bahá'u'lláh, said that the one nearest the threshold of God is he who serves all and who considers himself evanescent and non-existent; who forgets himself utterly, turns to God alone and for the sake of God serves all mankind.

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O people of the world! I command you to that which is the cause of exalting your stations. Hold fast to divine piety and adhere to the hem of that which is just. Truly I say, the tongue is for honorable mention; pollute it not with evil speech. God hath forgiven that which is past. Henceforth ye must all speak in that which is proper. Abstain from cursing, reviling and that which is annoying to man.

(Words of Bahá'u'lláh)

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Work for the sake of God and for the improvement of humanity, without any expectation of praise and reward. The present (is always) unimportant, but we must make our present so filled with mighty and altruistic deeds as to assume significant weight and momentous importance in the future.

Will is the center or focus of human understanding. We must will to know God, just as we must will in order to possess the life he has given us. The human will must be subdued and trained into the will of God. It is a great power to have a strong will, but a greater power to give that will to God. The will is what we do, the understanding is what we know. Will and understanding must be one in the Cause of God. Intention brings attainment.

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In the world of humanity, right intention is the greatest means of personal development. If a person has right intentions, he will succeed in all of his undertakings.

## CHAPTER III

### PRAYER

**A**SK and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

(Words of Jesus)

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There is nothing sweeter in the world of existence than prayer.

Man must live in a state of prayer. The most blessed condition is the condition of prayer and supplication. Prayer is conversation with God. The greatest attainment or the sweetest state is none other than conversation with God. It creates spirituality, creates mindfulness and celestial feelings, begets new attractions of the Kingdom and engenders the susceptibilities of the higher intelligence. The highest attribute given Moses is the following verse: "God carried along a conversation with Moses."

What is prayer? It is conversation with God. While man prays he sees himself in the presence of

God. If he concentrates his attention he will surely at the time of prayer realize that he is conversing with God. Often at night I do not sleep, and the thoughts of this world weigh heavily on my mind. I toss uneasily in my bed. Then in the darkness of the night I get up and pray—converse with God. It is most sweet and uplifting.

Prayer and supplication are so effective that they inspire one's heart for the whole day with high ideals and supreme sanctity and calmness. One's heart must be sensitive to the music of prayer. He must feel the effect of prayer. He must not be like an organ from which softest notes stream forth without having consciousness of sensation in itself.

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Prayer and supplication are two wings whereby man soars toward the heavenly mansion of the True One. However, verbal repetition of prayer does not suffice. One must live in a continual attitude of prayer. When man is spiritually free his mind becomes the altar of prayer and his heart the sanctuary of prayer. Then the meaning of the verse, "We will lift up from before his eyes the veil," will become fulfilled in him.

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'Abdu'l-Bahá said we should speak in the language of heaven—in the language of the spirit—



for there is a language of the spirit and heart. It is as different from our language as our own language is different from that of the animals, who express themselves only by cries and sounds.

When we pray to God a feeling fills our hearts. This is the language of the spirit which speaks to God.

When in prayer we are freed from all outward things and turn to God, then it is as if in our hearts we heard the voice of God. Without words we speak, we communicate, we converse with God and hear the answer. It is said that Moses in the wilderness heard the voice of God. But that wilderness, that holy land was his own heart. All of us when we attain to a true spiritual condition can hear the voice of God speaking to us in that wilderness. We must strive to attain to that condition by being separated from all things and from the people of the world and by turning to God alone. It will take some effort on the part of man to attain to that condition but he must work for it, strive for it. We can attain to it by thinking and caring less for material things and more for the spiritual. The further we go from the one, the nearer we are to the other—the choice is ours!

Our spiritual perception, our inward sight must be opened so that we can see the signs and traces of God's spirit in everything. Everything can reflect to us the light of the spirit.

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When asked if prayer was necessary since presumably God knows the wishes of all our hearts 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

"If one friend feels love for another he will wish to say so. Though he knows that the friend is aware that he loves him, he will still wish to say so. If there is anyone that you love do you not seek an opportunity to speak with him, to speak lovingly with him, to bring him gifts, to write him letters? If you do not feel such a desire it would be that you did not love your friend. God knows the wishes of all hearts. But the impulse to pray is a natural one springing from man's love to God.

"If there be no love, if there be no pleasure or spiritual enjoyment in prayer, do not pray. Prayer should spring from love, from the desire of the person to commune with God. Just as the lover never ceases from wishing to communicate with the beloved so does the lover of God always wish for constant communication with the Deity.

"Prayer need not be in words, but in thought and attitude. But if this love and this desire are lacking it is useless to try to force them. Words without love mean nothing. If a person talks to you as an unpleasant duty with no love or pleasure in his meeting with you, do you wish to converse with him? Efforts should first be made to make attachment to God."

When asked how this attachment is to be made, how the love of God is to be obtained, since there are many people in the world who admit the exist-

ence of a Deity but without any emotion, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

"Knowledge is love. Study, listen to exhortations, think, try to understand the wisdom and greatness of God. . . . The soil must be fertilized before the seed be sown."

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Man becomes like a stone unless he continually supplicates to God. The heart of man is like a mirror which is covered with dust and to cleanse it one must continually pray to God that it may become clean. The act of supplication is the polish which erases all worldly desires. The delight of supplicating and entreating before God cuts one's heart from the world. When the taste of man is nourished by honey he never likes to taste any other sweetmeat. Therefore, prayer is a key by which the doors of the kingdom are opened. There are many subjects which are difficult for man to solve. But during prayer and supplication they are unveiled and there is nothing that man cannot find out. Mohammed said: "Prayer is a ladder by which every one can ascend to heaven." If one's heart is cut from the world his prayer is the ascension to heaven.

In the highest prayer men pray only for the love of God, not because they fear him or hell or hope for bounty or heaven. Thus the souls in whose hearts the fire of love is enkindled are attracted by supplication. True supplication to God must therefore be actuated by love to God only. . . . When a

man falls in love with a human being it is impossible for him to keep from mentioning the name of his beloved. How much more difficult is it to keep from mentioning the name of God, when one has come to love him. One can pray for the dead and by so doing their spiritual condition will become better. The spiritual man finds no delight in anything save in commemoration of God. When one is confirmed his heart becomes rejoiced through the commemoration of God.

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O thou daughter of the Kingdom! Know thou that supplication and prayer is the Water of Life. It is the cause of the vivification of existence and brings glad tidings and joy to the soul. Show thou attention to this matter as far as thou canst and summon others to prayer and supplication.

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Question: "What is prayer, attitude or word?"

Answer: "Prayer is both attitude and word, it depends upon the soul-condition. It is like a song, both words and music make the song. Sometimes the melody will move us, sometimes the words."

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The prayerful attitude is attained by two means. Just as a man who is going to deliver a lecture prepares therefor and his preparation consists of certain meditations and notations, so the preparation

for the prayerful attitude is detaching one's mind from all other thoughts save the thought of God at the time of prayer and then praying when the prayerful attitude shall be attained.

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Supplication to God at morn and eve is conducive to the joy of hearts, and prayer causes spirituality and fragrance. Thou shouldst necessarily continue therein.

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Neglect not praying and communing in the gloomy midnights and morn and eve and offer glory unto thy Lord, the Supreme.

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Know that nothing will benefit thee in this life save supplication and invocation unto God, service in his vineyard, and, with a heart full of love, to be in constant servitude unto him.

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Draw nigh unto God and persevere in communion with thy Lord so that the fire of God's love may glow more luminously in the heart, its heat grow stronger and give warmth to that region and its sound reach the Supreme Concourse.

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Supplicate unto him and beseech in the middle of the night and at early morn just as a needy and cap-

tive one beseeches. It is incumbent upon thee to turn unto the kingdom of God and to pray, supplicate and invoke during all times. This is the means by which thy soul shall ascend upward to the apex of the gift of God.

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O thou spiritual friend! Thou hast asked the wisdom of prayer. Know thou that prayer is indispensable and obligatory and man under no pretext whatsoever is excused therefrom unless he be mentally unsound or an insurmountable obstacle prevent him.

The wisdom of prayer is this, that it causes a connection between the servant and the True One because in that state of prayer man with all his heart and soul turns his face towards His Highness the Almighty, seeking his association and desiring his love and compassion. The greatest happiness for a lover is to converse with his beloved, and the greatest gift for a seeker is to become familiar with the object of his longing. That is why the greatest hope of every soul who is attracted to the Kingdom of God is to find an opportunity to entreat and supplicate at the ocean of his utterance, goodness and generosity.

Besides all this, prayer and fasting is the cause of awakening and mindfulness and is conducive to protection and preservation from tests.

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As to thy question, "Why pray? What is the wisdom thereof, for God has established everything and executes all affairs after the best order and he ordains everything according to a becoming measure and puts things in their places with the greatest propriety and perfection—therefore what is the wisdom in beseeching and supplicating and in stating one's wants and seeking help?" Know thou, verily, it is becoming of a weak one to supplicate to the strong One and it behooveth a seeker of bounty to beseech the glorious, bountiful One. When one supplicates to his Lord, turns to him and seeks bounty from his ocean this supplication is by itself a light to his heart, an illumination to his sight, a life to his soul and an exaltation to his being.

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Therefore, during thy supplications to God and thy reciting "Thy name is my healing" consider how thine heart is cheered, thy soul delighted by the spirit of the love of God and thy mind attracted to the Kingdom of God! By these attractions one's ability and capacity increase. When the vessel is widened the water increaseth and when the thirst grows the bounty of the cloud becomes agreeable to the taste of man. This is the mystery of supplication and the wisdom of stating one's wants.

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Man is eternally in a state of communion and prayer with the source of all good. The highest

and most elevating state is the state of prayer. Prayer is communion with God. . . . Its efficacy is conditional upon the freedom of the heart from extraneous suggestions and mundane thoughts. The worshipper must pray with a detached spirit, unconditional surrender of the will, concentrated attention and a magnetic spiritual passion. His innermost being must be stirred with the ethereal breeze of holiness. If the mirror of his life is polished from the dross of all desires the heavenly pictures and star-like images of the Kingdom of God will become fully reflected therein. Then he will be given power to translate these celestial forms into his own daily life and the lives of many thousands.

Automatic, formalistic prayers which do not touch the core of the heart are of no avail. How sweet, how delicious, how satisfying, how spiritual is prayer in the middle of the night! While all the eyes are closed the eyes of the worshipper are wide open. While all the ears are stopped the ears of the suppliant are attuned to the subtle music of God. While the majority of the people are fast asleep the adorer of the Ideal Beloved is wakeful. All around him there is a rare and delicate silence, deep, airy, ethereal silence, calm, magical and subtle—and there is the worshipper, communing with nature and the Author of nature.

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Question: "How do saints become saints?"

Answer: "Through prayer, supplications, purification of the heart and good wishes."

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You have asked concerning approval of Christian Science treatment and healing.

Spirit has influence; prayer has spiritual effect. Therefore we pray, "O God! heal this sick one!" Perchance God will answer. Does it matter who prays? God will answer the prayer of every servant if that prayer is urgent. His mercy is vast, ilimitable. He answers the prayers of all his servants. He answers the prayer of this plant. The plant prays potentially, "O God! Send me rain!" God answers this prayer and the plant grows. God will answer any one. He answers prayers potentially. Before we were born into this world did we not pray, "O God! Give me a mother; give me two fountains of bright milk; purify the air for my breathing; grant me rest and comfort; prepare food for my sustenance and living!" Did we not pray potentially for these needed blessings before we were created? When we came into this world did we not find our prayers answered? Did we not find mother, father, food, light, home and every other necessity and blessing although we did not actually ask for them? Therefore it is natural that God will give to us when we ask him. His mercy is all-encircling.

But we ask for things which the divine wisdom does not desire for us and there is no answer to our prayer. His wisdom does not sanction what we wish. We pray, "O God! Make me wealthy." If this prayer were universally answered human affairs would be at a standstill. There would be no one left to work in the streets, no one to run the trains. Therefore it is evident that it would not be well for us if all prayers were answered. The affairs of the world would be interfered with, energies crippled and progress hindered. But whatever we ask for which is in accord with divine wisdom, God will answer. Assuredly!

For instance, a very feeble patient may ask the doctor to give him food which would be positively dangerous to his life and condition. He may beg for roast meat. The doctor is kind and wise. He knows it would be dangerous to his patient so he refuses to allow it. The doctor is merciful, the patient ignorant. Through the doctor's kindness the patient recovers; his life is saved. Yet the patient may cry out that the doctor was unkind, not good, because he refused to answer his pleading.

God is merciful. In his mercy he answers the prayers of all his servants when they are according to his supreme wisdom.

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Christ said, "Go into thy chamber and shut the door, and pray to thy Father which is in heaven." Why did he say this? It is with the tongue that

man expresses his feelings to another man. But with the language of the heart man prays to God. Though God is within the heart of man, is ever present in every place, yet man lifts up his eyes to heaven and prays as if God were there, seated upon a throne. Surely this is pure superstition! Why should he utter the words, "O heavenly Father"? Why should it be necessary for him to repeat prayers aloud and with the tongue? One reason for this is that if the heart alone is speaking the mind can be more easily disturbed. But repeating the words so that the tongue and heart act together enables the mind to become concentrated. Then the whole man is surrounded by the spirit of prayer and the act is more perfect.

Another reason is that by the outward signs of entering into his room and praying the attention of others is attracted and they begin to ask, "Why does he do this?" and are aroused to enquire about the truth.

Man may say, "I can pray to God whenever I wish, when the feelings of my heart are drawn to God; when I am in the wilderness, when I am in the city, or wherever I may be. Why should I go where others are gathered upon a special day, at a certain hour, to unite my prayers with theirs when I may not be in a frame of mind for praying?" To think in this way is useless imagination for where many are gathered together their force is greater. Separate soldiers fighting alone and individually have not the force of a united army. If all the

soldiers in this spiritual war gather together then their united spiritual feelings help each other and their prayers become more acceptable.

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If every man knew what was best for his health, if every man could teach himself, if every soldier knew how to fight by himself, if every passenger could sail the ship, what need would there be for the doctor, for the teacher, for the general or for the captain? As he has not this wisdom he must first ascertain their truth and then follow their directions. Until he does this he cannot advance.

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Thou hast asked what shouldst thou do and what prayer shouldst thou offer in order to become informed of the mysteries of God. Pray thou with an attracted heart and supplicate thou with a spirit stirred by the glad-tidings of God. Then the doors of the kingdom of mysteries shall be opened before thy face and thou shalt comprehend the realities of all things.

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Asked if we are not able through love and faith to make those who have departed from this life hear of the Cause who had not heard of it while here, 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied:

"Yes, surely sincere prayer always has its effect and it has a great influence in the other world. We

are never cut off from those who are there. The real and genuine influence is not in this world but in that other."

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Supplication and prayer on behalf of others will surely be effective. When hearts are united, when faces are turned towards the kingdom of Abha, surely enlightenment will be the result.

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In answer to the question, "Why should one pray through Christ as the Christians do, or through another manifestation of God and why should we not pray to God direct?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

"If we wish to pray we must have some object upon which to concentrate. If we turn to God we must direct our hearts to a certain center. If man worships God otherwise than through his Manifestation he must first form a conception of God and that conception is created by his own mind. As the finite cannot comprehend the Infinite so God is not to be comprehended in this fashion. That which man conceives with his own mind he comprehends. That which he can comprehend is not God. That conception of God which a man has is but a phantasm, an image, an imagination, an illusion. There is no connection between such a conception and the Supreme Being.

"If a man wishes to know God he must find him in the perfect mirror, Christ or Bahá'u'lláh. In

either of these mirrors he will see reflected the Sun of Divinity.

"As we know the physical sun by its splendor, by its light and heat, so we know God, by the spiritual sun, when he shines forth from the temple of Manifestation by his attributes of perfection, by the beauty of his qualities and by the splendor of his light. The Manifestations of God are the focal centers of the world. . . .

"The epitome of all worship is the worship of the attributes of Christ, not his personality."

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Turn thy face sincerely toward God; be severed from all save God; be ablaze with the fire of the love of God; be purified and sanctified, and beseech and supplicate unto God. Verily, he responds unto those who invoke him, is near unto those who pray unto him. And he is thy companion in every loneliness, and befriends every exile.

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Regarding thy question about the morning prayer. Both meanings are included in the word dawn—the natural dawn, and the dawn of the Kingdom. When a soul rises in the morning from sleep before everything else he must commemorate the name of God in order that he may obtain spirituality and illumination.

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Someone present asked how it was that in prayer and meditation the heart often turns with instinctive appeal to some friend who has passed into the next life.

'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "It is a law of God's creation that the weak should lean upon the strong. Those to whom you turn may be mediators of God's power to you, even as when on earth. But it is the one Holy Spirit which strengthens all men."

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Those who have ascended have different attributes from those who are still on earth, yet there is no real separation. In prayer there is a mingling of condition. Pray for them as they pray for you.

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O God and assister of all! . . . Verily, thou art the hearer of prayers, and verily, thou art powerful in all things!

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The heavens of thy mercy and the oceans of thy bounty are so vast that thou hast never disappointed those who willed to come to thee!

(Bahá'u'lláh)

## CHAPTER IV

### FAITH, SEVERANCE, SACRIFICE

**A**LL things are possible to him that believeth. . . . Verily I say unto you if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . . ye shall say unto this mountain, . . . Be thou taken up and cast into the sea and it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

(Words of Jesus)

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I say unto you that anyone who will arise in the cause of God at this time shall be filled with the Spirit of God. And God will send his hosts from heaven to help you and nothing shall be impossible to you if you have faith. And now I give you a commandment which shall be for a covenant, . . . that ye have faith; that your faith be steadfast as a rock which no storms can move, which nothing can disturb, and that it endure through all things even to the end. . . . Be not shaken in your faith. . . . As ye have faith so shall your powers and blessings be. This is the balance; this is the balance; this is the balance!

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The foundation of praiseworthy virtue is faith. The greater the faith of man the more illumined his life. Faith is a miracle; it has a wonder-working power. Its spiritual influence refines the character, suffers man to become humble and meek, places in his heart the fear of God, prompts him to devote his time to humanitarian deeds, spiritualizes his nature, exalts his ideals and enkindles his lamp. The greater the faith of man the more numerous will be his philanthropic actions. Faith is like unto the trees, deeds are like unto the fruits. Faith is like unto the lamp, deeds are like unto the light.

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Question: "What is real faith?"

Answer: "Faith outwardly means to believe in the message a Manifestation brings to the world and accept the fulfillment in him of that which the prophets have announced. But in reality faith embodies three degrees: to confess with the tongue; to believe in the heart; to show forth in our actions. These three things are essential to true faith. The important requirement is the love of God in the heart. For instance, we say a lamp gives light. In reality the oil which burns produces the illumination, but the lamp and the chimney are necessary before the light can express itself. The love of God is in the light. The tongue is the chimney or the medium by which that love finds expression. It also protects the light. Likewise the members of the body reflect the inner light by their actions. So

the tongue confesses in speech and the parts of the body confess in their actions the love of God within the soul of a true believer. Thus it was that Peter confessed Christ by his tongue and his actions. When the tongue and actions reflect the love of God the real qualities of man are revealed. Christ said 'You will know them by their fruits'; that is, by their deeds. If a believer shows forth divine qualities we know that true faith is in his heart. If we do not find evidence of these qualities, if he is selfish or wicked, he has not the true kind of faith. Faith is mentioned in the Scriptures as the 'second birth' or 'everlasting life.' In this day true belief is the Spirit of God. Many claim to possess true faith, but it is rare, and when it exists it cannot be destroyed."

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By our actions we reveal what is growing in the heart. Actions are mirrors of the soul. . . .

Faith is not so much what we believe as what we carry out.

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Man must prove whatsoever he speaketh by deeds and actions. If he claims faith he must live and do according to the teachings of the Kingdom of Abha.

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Faith is the magnet which draws the confirmation of the Merciful One. Service is the magnet which attracts the heavenly strength.

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We hear there is an invention; we believe it is good; then we come and see it. We hear there is wealth; we see it; we work hard for it; we become rich ourselves and help others. We know and see the Light, we go close to it, are warmed by it, and reflect its rays on others. This is real faith, and thus we receive power to become the eternal sons of God.

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Question: "How can one increase in faith?"

Answer: "You must strive. A child is uninformed. Through study he obtains knowledge. Search for truth.

"There are three kinds of faith. First, that which is from tradition and birth. For example: A child is born of Mohammedan parents; he is a Mohammedan. This faith is weak, traditional faith. Second, that which comes from knowledge and is the faith of understanding. This is good. But there is a better, the faith of practice. This is the real faith."

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Although a person of good deeds is acceptable at the threshold of the Almighty, yet it is first *to know* and then *to do*. Although a blind man produces a most wonderful and exquisite art, yet he is deprived of seeing it. See how most animals labor for man, draw loads and facilitate travel; yet as they are ignorant they do not receive any reward for this toil and labor. The cloud rains; roses and hyacinths

grow, the plains and meadows, the gardens and trees become green and blossom, yet they do not realize the results and outcome of their activities. Therefore, they are not praised and commended, . . . This lamp is lighted, but as it has not a conscious knowledge of itself no one has become glad because of it.

Moreover, a soul of excellent deeds and good manners will undoubtedly advance, no matter from what horizon he beholds the light radiating. Herein lies the difference. By faith is meant first, conscious knowledge; second, the practice of good deeds.

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Praise be to God, you are firm in the Covenant and steadfast in the Testament. Firmness and steadfastness are the greatest conditions of faith and assurance. As long as the tree does not send its roots to the bowels of the earth it will not become secure and established, neither will it grow and develop into full stature. But if it is not firmly rooted it will be broken by the blowing of one strong wind.

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There is no wonder in confessing the appearance of the Kingdom of God, but true wonder consists in good deeds, obedience to the commands and teachings of the True Lord, and firmness in this path, even when the storm is at its height.

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One of the requirements of faithfulness is that thou mayest sacrifice thyself and in the divine path, close thine eye to every pleasure and strive with all thy soul that thou mayest disappear and be lost, like unto a drop, in the ocean of the love of God.

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The Manifestation of God is a perfect example of real obedience. Like him we must sacrifice every thing, every plan, every longing and ideal must be given up completely to the will of God. We must look to God for all we desire, all we wish to attain. The will of God must work out its purpose in us. Our human will must be laid down in sacrifice and love. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has given everything in sacrifice and obedience to the will of God. . . . All our soul-powers, our outward self, our inward self must be consecrated to God in service and sacrifice. Even life must be given if necessary. If we have not reached this station of nothingness we have not attained to real obedience to the will of God. A pupil must submit entirely to the will of the teacher. This is true sacrifice, true obedience.

Real obedience and real sacrifice are identical, they are absolute readiness to follow and perform whatever you are called upon to do in the Cause of God. When you really love God you will be willing to sacrifice everything and submit yourself entirely to his will. Consecrate yourself wholly to him. His will is everything. His service is paramount.

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As to the fact that man must entirely forget himself: By this is meant that he should arise in the mystery of sacrifice, and that is the disappearance of mortal sentiments and the extinction of blamable morals which constitute the temporal gloom, and not that the physical health should be changed into weakness and debility.

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Asceticism is not necessary. A soul grows by the exercise of human virtues and the observance of human morals and by divine favor. The extreme asceticism of the saints was superstition. The monasticism of the Christian church was mistaken. St. Paul was responsible for much of this because in one of his epistles he praises those who do not marry and prophesied that sects would arise which would not marry. St. Paul disapproved of marriage. But God did not give us gifts that we should reject them. He created all these blessings that his servants may bless him.

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In this day or dispensation asceticism is of the spiritual type, for spiritual asceticism is right and is productive of results. On the one hand a man may attain virtues by the inherent force of his nature; on the other hand these virtues may be due to the weakness of his nature. For instance, an infant is detached from the world. That severance or detachment is due to its weakness. But a wise man

having passed to the stage of maturity will likewise be detached from the world and care nothing for the world. Severance at that stage is indicative of inherent strength of character. A withered arm is incapable of stoning or striking anybody. That harmlessness is not due to virtue, it is due to imperfection. But if a person whose arm and hand are well and whole shall not strike, then it is a symptom of strength and virtue. A man who is a mute and dumb cannot lie, but that lack of lying is an indication of his weakness, not of his perfection. But he whose tongue speaketh and yet lieth not is verily mighty. . . . A dead man is harmless, no harm can come from him, but that is not eulogy. But if he be alive and harmless that is eulogizing him. Now we come to the subject.

By enduring ascetic hardships the powers of nature will undergo dissolution which will result in great weakness whereby one is made incapable of doing anything. He will not show any temper. He will not do any evil. He will not cause a riot; he is quiet. He is wronged; he is like a lamb. But this is due to weakness. But he who has attained spiritual asceticism acquires these attributes by strength of character. When a man by nature, that is to say, by some imperfection of nature, is incapable of committing uncommendable acts, that is nothing in his favor. But if he by sheer force of will and spiritual training attains to a state of character which prevents him from doing such things, this is a great credit to him. The insane man is

entirely detached from all bonds and ties; he is absolutely free from all attachments. But this is not a commendation to him. But when the disciples of Christ, who were in a normal state of mind and body let go of everything in life, that is indeed commendable. Physical asceticism will in the course of time cause absolute atrophy of the parts, resulting in the greatest weakness. There will be no love of transgression, no attachment to this life, no covetousness, no aggressiveness, but all this is due to great weakness of powers. But spiritual asceticism will help one to attain to such blossoming of powers as will enable him to make up his mind against the things that are not to be and will encourage him in the things to be. In this dispensation there is no physical or material asceticism. The spiritual are ascetics, and this asceticism is expressed by training souls and educating humanity in morals and in the acquisition of the qualities of the Kingdom.

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Fasting is a symbol. Fasting signifies abstinence from lust. Physical fasting is a symbol of that abstinence, and is a reminder; that is, just as a person abstains from physical appetites, he is to abstain from self-appetites and self-desires. But mere abstention from food has no effect on the spirit. It is a mere symbol, a reminder. Otherwise, it is of no importance. Fasting for this purpose does not mean entire abstinence from food. The golden rule as to food is, do not take too much or too little.



Moderation is necessary. There is a sect in India who practice extreme abstinence, and gradually reduce their food until they exist on almost nothing. But their intelligence suffers. A man is not fit to do service for God in brains or body if he is weakened by lack of food. He cannot see clearly.

When told of American experiments whereby the mind was supposed to benefit personally by abstinence, 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: "It is imagination. . . . To sum up, God knows better than all. He has given us an appetite; therefore we should eat. If the body be deprived of that which is necessary for it the mind suffers. God asks of us according to our capacity. If a man who has only sufficient strength to carry fifty kilos be burdened with a hundred kilos he will fall. Moderation and common sense must be used."

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The reality of man is like unto a sea, and the Holy Power is like unto brilliant pearls. Not until the sea moveth in waves doth it throw a shell of pearls upon the shore. Therefore if thou wishest to become heavenly cut thy attention from the earth, that is, cease to attach thy heart unto this world and seek attachment to the Kingdom and turn unto God. And when thou doest this thou wilt become the mercy of God and a gift of the Almighty.

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Man must become evanescent in God, must forget his own selfish conditions in order that he may rise to the station of sacrifice. This station should be attained to such a degree that if he sleeps it should not be for pleasure but to rest the body in order to work better, to speak better, to explain more beautifully, to serve the servants of God and to prove his truths. When he remains awake he should seek to be attentive, serve the Cause of God and sacrifice his own stations for those of God. When he attains to this station the confirmations of the Holy Spirit will surely reach him and man with this power can withstand all who inhabit the earth.

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No one will obtain this great favor save he who cuts himself from this world, being attracted by the love of God; who is dead to the desires and appetites of self, sincere to God in all things and meek, humble, imploring, pleading and lowly before God.

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By being severed from the world I do not mean holding in contempt the things of the world, for civilization and education are the means of progress. I mean that one must not attach his heart to the world.

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All that has been created is for man who is at the apex of creation and must be thankful for

the divine bestowals. All material things are for us so that through our gratitude we may learn to understand life as a divine benefit. . . . Therefore we must be happy and pass our time in praises, appreciating all things. But there is something else—detachment. We can appreciate without attaching ourselves to the things of this world. It sometimes happens that if a man loses his fortune he is so disheartened that he dies or becomes insane. While enjoying the things of this world we must remember that perhaps one day we shall have to do without them.

Attach not thyself to anything unless in it thou seest the reality of God. This is the first step into the court of eternity. The earth life lasts but a short time, even its benefits are transitory. That which is temporary does not deserve our heart's attachment.

Detachment does not consist in setting fire to one's house or becoming bankrupt or throwing one's fortune out of the window or even in giving away all one's possessions. Detachment consists in refraining from letting our possessions possess us. A prosperous merchant who is not attached to his business knows detachment. A banker whose occupation does not prevent him from serving humanity is detached. A poor man can be attached to a small thing. . . . There are many rich people who are detached, and many poor who are not.

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We must not be attached to anything in the world. It is not worth one thought. We must not desire for those we love that they should be captivated by the attachments of this world. Nay, rather, we should desire for them eternal things, the things of the Kingdom. We should seek to free ourselves from all attachments. The things of this world are like the waves of the sea. It is impossible that they should endure. In comparison, the things of the Kingdom are like rocks, firm and enduring.

If one is attached to the demands of the human body he will never be at rest, for the body is constantly demanding change. This tree growing before the window, it is impossible that it should not die, no matter how it is tended and how well it is watered. How foolish to spend one's time and energy on that which can not endure. If one is turned toward heavenly things he will become like a rock. But if his heart be attached to anything in this world it will become subject to change. Attachments are like ropes which drag us to the earth when we try to fly. To be detached is to be free, is to be flying in a new ether, is to be light, is to be joyous—and a Bahá'i should be joyous. He should attain to such a station of joy that the world will enquire as to his secret. If he be entirely detached and emptied of self he will be enabled to start in a cold heart a great fire.

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The mystery of sacrifice is a most great subject and is inexhaustible. Briefly it is as follows: The moth is a sacrifice to the candle. The spring of water is a sacrifice to the thirsty one. The sincere lover is a sacrifice to the loved one and the longing one is a sacrifice to the beloved. One must wholly forget himself, must become a wanderer (in the Abode of the Beloved). He must seek the good pleasure of the True One, desire the face of the True One, and walk in the path of the True One; he must become intoxicated with his cup, resigned in his hand and close his eyes to life and living in order that he may shine like unto the light of truth from the horizon of Eternity. This is the first station of sacrifice.

The second station of sacrifice is as follows: Man must become severed from the human world; be delivered from the darkness of this world; the illumination of mercifulness must shine and radiate in him, the nether world become as non-existent and the Kingdom become manifest. He must become like iron thrown within the furnace of fire. The qualities of iron such as blackness, coldness, and solidity which belongs to the earth disappear and vanish while the characteristics of fire such as redness, glowing and heat which belong to the Kingdom become apparent and visible. Therefore, iron hath sacrificed its qualities and grades to the fire, acquiring the virtues of that element.

Likewise, when souls are released from the fet-

ters of the world, the imperfections of mankind and animalistic darkness and have stepped into the realm of detachment, have partaken from the outpouring of the Placeless and have acquired lordly perfection, they are the "ransomed ones" of the Sun of Truth, who are hastening to the altar of heart and soul.

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When man dedicates his life to a cause he must dedicate himself entirely, then he is really dedicated. This is not through word but through deed. One must dedicate his life completely, fully, in reality, just as the dead branch sacrifices its life to the fire, and just as the oil sacrifices its life to give light. This is the greatest station, the station of sacrifice. There is no greater than this.

In Oriental language there is the expression, "May my life be a sacrifice to you," and a man writing a hundred letters a day might use these words a hundred times and yet he would not sacrifice anything for his friend. But this is custom, a usage. Everybody who writes a letter to his friend says, "May my life be a sacrifice to you," and perhaps he does not realize the meaning at all.

The station of sacrifice is the great foundation. When you read the Old and New Testaments you will find that constantly the word sacrifice is mentioned. It is recorded that the Israelites sacrificed sheep that their sins might be forgiven. In the time of Adam Cain made a sacrifice of sheaves of

wheat and Abel made sacrifice of sheep. Now this is a symbol, and this persisted after the time of Christ.

What is the symbol? Just as the sheep sacrificed its life likewise this natural state of man which is the animalistic state must be sacrificed. How should it be sacrificed? The vices of the animalistic state of man must be entirely annihilated and he must be characterized with divine virtues. It was a symbol and before Christ appeared all the Israelitish prophets made sacrifice of animals. This was a mystery of a higher sacrifice, and when Christ came he said, "I will sacrifice myself for the sake of salvation of all." What did he mean? He meant, to change their characters and in this way make them heavenly, in this way make them God-like, spiritual and divine. This is one of the meanings of sacrifice.

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The greatest sacrifice is to forget one's self entirely, to sacrifice everything, as did Christ.

Behold a candle how it gives its light. It weeps its life away, drop by drop, in order to give forth its flame of light.

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I wish for the happiness and prosperity of the believers even in this material world, but they must not be attracted by it or attached to it. Extreme wealth or utter poverty should be equal to them.

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Concentrate the soul upon God so that it may become as a fountain pouring out the Water of Life to a thirsty world. Live up to the principles of sacrifice. The world will then become as nothing and be without power to attract you away from God. Sacrifice your will to the will of God. The Kingdom is attained by the one who forgets self. Everything becomes yours by renunciation of everything.

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Sacrifice of life is of two kinds. To be killed for the Cause is not so difficult as to live for it in absolute obedience to the commands of God. And without attaining this condition all effort is without final result. One who cares for love, for husband, wife or children more than for the Cause of God has not attained.

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It is incumbent upon every one of you to engage in some one occupation, such as arts, trades and the like. We have made this your occupation identical with the worship of God, the True One. Reflect, O people, upon the mercy of God and upon his favors; then thank him in the mornings and evenings.

Waste not your time in idleness and indolence, and occupy yourselves with that which will profit yourselves and others beside yourselves. . . . Every



soul who occupies himself in an art or trade—this will be accounted an act of worship before God.  
(Words of Bahá'u'lláh)

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The guidance of God is that which will always guide people in the right way. All human beings are earthly; their hearts are connected with this world. Day and night their thoughts and occupations are earthly; all belong to this world. They think about the honors of this world, or about the riches and wealth of this world, or of name and fame in this world. Their days and nights pass in this way. The guidance of God makes it evident and plain when the way of the Kingdom, the divine path, is opened, that this is the road of the Kingdom.

It is not sufficient only to distinguish the way of the Kingdom, only to discover the heavenly way: you must travel upon it until the end is reached. For example, that a man discovers the way to America is not sufficient. He must travel in it that he may reach that country. If he remains for years discovering more about the way yet does not travel by it, he will never arrive. It is not sufficient for a child to know where the school is; he must study in it that he may gain knowledge. Faith is not merely to know which is the school and to recognize the teacher; one must acquire knowledge in this school. If one does not gain knowledge it is useless to know of the school.

This is what Christ said: "Ye shall know the

tree by its fruits." If you see one who is truthful, who really believes and is just, who is attracted to the Kingdom, and whose will is annihilated in the way of God, then you will know he is a tree of the Kingdom, if he shows forth all these qualities. If you see one whose heart is attached to this world and in whom there is not truthfulness or detachment or turning to God, one who is not occupied in praising and speaking of God, or in attraction to the love of God, then you will know he is a tree of darkness. For true belief is not only to acknowledge the oneness of God: by belief we mean that the reality of a man will be characterized by divine characteristics. If his reality is dark, he will become enlightened; if he is heedless, he will become conscious; if he is sleeping, he will be awakened; if he is earthly, he will become heavenly; if he is satanic, he will become divine. This is the meaning of true belief.

Therefore I say that man must travel in the way of God. Day by day he must endeavor to become better, his belief must increase and become firmer, his good qualities and his turning to God must be greater, the fire of his love must flame more brightly; then day by day he will make progress, for to stop advancing is the means of going back. The bird when he flies soars ever higher and higher, for as soon as he stops flying he will come down. Every day, in the morning when arising you should compare today with yesterday and see in what condition you are. If you see your belief is stronger

and your heart more occupied with God and your love increased and your freedom from the world greater than thank God and ask for the increase of these qualities. You must begin to pray and repent for all that you have done which is wrong and you must implore and ask for help and assistance that you may become better than yesterday so that you may continue to make progress.

Do not let the desires of the self find a place within you; for it is certain that when you reach the highest station of spirituality one worldly desire can cause your downfall. The spirit is like a bird; when it flies in the air it is always mounting. But the self is like the hunter who is thinking all the time how to catch the bird. As when a bird is in the air the hunter aims at it and brings it down, so is it with the human desires in the soul. You will see that by one arrow, one shot, it will be brought low. This arrow is the connection with this world, the occupations of this world, the desires of this world, the honors of this world.

In many ways the hunter will stop the spirit from ascending. That is why you must ask and implore and entreat: "O God, protect me from myself!"

No brotherhood appears in the world as lasting save that of the spiritual type. Only that brotherhood is permanent and eternal, for it is a spiritual brotherhood through the breath of the Holy Spirit. It is absolutely indissoluble; permanently will it remain intact, and in all the worlds of God will it be everlasting. It is a brotherhood not based upon

thoughts, but one that has emanated from the love of God. It is not founded for the attainment of physical or material interests. This spiritual brotherhood has no other purpose than nearness to the Threshold of God. It is not for defensive purposes but for the illumination of the human heart. . . .

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Material friendship is not permanent; for every kind of love which is not purely for the sake of God is ended in hatred. Amity which is not for the sake of the Lord changeth into enmity. But the divine friends are the faithful ones; they are the consolation of the heart and the peace of my spirit. They are spirit embodied, love personified, sincerity incarnated, loyal friends and staunch lovers. Therefore they are the cause of the happiness of the heart and soul.

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Now the believers of God must live in accord with these divine teachings. They must become kind fathers to the children of humanity, affectionate brothers to the youths of mankind and soul-sacrificing children toward those laden with age. The aim is this: you must be in the utmost state of joy and fragrance, love and kindness toward all, even toward the enemies. Meet the persecutions and adversity with the utmost faithfulness. Whenever animosity appears deal with it with forbearance.

make your breasts the targets for the arrows and spears of opposition. Brave the ridicule, the blame and the rebuke with perfect love so that all the nations may observe the power of the Most Great Name, and all the people may acknowledge the potency of the Blessed Perfection, showing how he hath destroyed the foundation of strangeness, hath guided the inhabitants of the world to unity and love, hath illumined the realm of man and hath transformed this terrestrial globe into the delectable paradise. These people are like children, negligent and mindless. One must train these children with the utmost love and carry them in the arms of grace with infinite tenderness, in order that they may taste the spiritual love of the Merciful One, that they may shine like the candles and cause the disappearance of the darkness of the world. Thus they may behold clearly and manifestly with what glorious crown and brilliant diadem the Most Great Name, the Blessed Perfection,—May my life be a sacrifice to him!—hath adorned the heads of his believers; what graces he hath poured upon the hearts of his friends; what love he hath brought into the world of humanity and what friendship he hath caused to appear among the children of men.

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O thou maid-servant of God, the penetration of the word of man depends upon the heat of the love of God. The more the splendors of the love of

God become manifest in the heart the greater will be the penetration of the word.

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It is very strange that when a face is not illumined with the light of the love of God it is dark. When you look into it the traces of the divine glad-tidings are not manifest, but when the lights of God shine upon it, it becomes bright and enlightened, as it is said, "In their faces you shall see the verdancy of paradise, and in their countenances is the sign of worship."

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The duty of the believers of God is to be servants to one another and attend to one another's wants. I am the servant of the friends of God.

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'Abdu'l-Bahá said the story of Mary and the ointment has a deep spiritual significance. The bottle which contained perfumed oil (ointment) represents the heart of Mary. The ointment is the love of God which filled her heart, and all this love she poured forth at the feet of Jesus. Then Judas said, "Why did she lavish all this love upon Jesus, who did not need it so much as the poor? Why did she not pour some of this great love and care upon them?" Then Jesus said that she did well to give him all her love.

That is what we ought to do. We must give all

our heart's love to God, then for his sake and through our love for him, we shall love all others. By "the poor" in this sense, is meant those who needed love. Bahá'u'lláh said, "The poor among you are My trust." Therefore we must always cherish the poor for his sake.

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As long as ye can, strive to set aglow the hearts with love; be attached to one another and be members of one body. Every soul of the beloved ones must honor the others, and withhold not his possessions and life from them, and by all means he must endeavor to make the others joyous and happy. But the others (the recipients of such love) must also be disinterested and life-sacrificing. Thus may this sunrise flood the horizons, this melody gladden and make happy all the people, this divine remedy become the panacea for every disease, this spirit of reality become the cause of life for every soul.

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Another commandment give I unto you! That ye love one another as I love you. Great mercy and blessings are promised to the people of your land, but on one condition; that their hearts be filled with the fire of love, that they live in perfect kindness and harmony, like one soul in different bodies, —*like one soul in different bodies*. If they fail in this condition, the great blessings will be deferred. Never forget this: Look at one another with the

eye of perfection. Look at me, follow me, be as I am. Take no thought for yourselves or your lives, —whether ye eat, or whether ye sleep, whether ye are comfortable, whether ye are well or ill, whether ye have friends or foes. For all of these things ye must not care at all. Look at me and be as I am. Ye must die to yourselves and to the world; so shall ye be born again and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Behold a candle, how it gives its light. It weeps its life away, drop by drop, in order to give forth its flame of light.

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Know thou that there is in the world of existence a center for each great matter and bounties shower from that center.

For instance, in the circle of the sun, the sun is the center of the light. Likewise there is a real center for pure love and now that Center is manifest in this world from which the lights of love reflect to all parts of the universe.

If thou partake but one ray from that Center thou wilt become self-sufficient from the world, finding a new condition and witnessing an exaltation which over-shadows all existence.

Pray God that thou mayst catch with all thy exertion the lights of the love from that Center.



## CHAPTER V

### LOVE

UNITY is love. It cannot be established without love. Therefore try, as far as possible, to be filled with love. Love is perpetual life, the most perfect vitality. Consider how love has gathered us together from the East and the West! If there were no love between us our friendship would have been concluded with salutations, such as "Good morning" and "Good evening." Love draws us in friendship to the people of every race and religion. He is a Bahá'í, of the people of Bahá, from whom we breathe the fragrance of this love again. . . . The highest love is independent of any personal advantages which we may draw from the love of the friend. If you love truly, your love for your friend will continue, even if he treats you ill. A man who really loves God, will love him whether he be ill, or sad, or unfortunate. He does not love God because he has created him—his life may be full of disassociations and miseries. He does not love God because he has given him health or wealth, because these may disappear at any moment. He does not love him because he has given him the strength of youth, because old age will surely come

upon him. The reason for his love is not because he is grateful for certain mercies and benefits. No!

The lover of God desires and adores him because he is perfection and because of his perfections. Love should be the very essence of love, and not dependent on outward manifestations.

A moth loves the light, though his wings are burnt. Though his wings are singed, he throws himself against the flame. He does not love the light because it has conferred some benefit upon him. Therefore he hovers round the light, though he sacrifices his wings.

This is the highest degree of love. Without this abandonment, this ecstasy, love is imperfect.

The lover of God loves him for himself, not for his own sake.

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When the fire of love is become ablaze, the harvest of reason will be wholly consumed.

(Bahá'u'lláh)

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All the divine messengers have come to this earth as specialists of the law of love. They came to teach a divine love to the children of men; they came to minister a divine healing between the nations; they came to cement in one the hearts of men and to bring humanity into a state of unity and concord. In this pathway, each one of these divine Manifestations of God's love has accepted innumer-

able calamities and hardships. For the sake of a realization of love and concord among men, they have sacrificed their lives. How many persecutions have they suffered so that they might bring into a state of harmony those contending nations and religions, so that they might create peace and consolation among these various peoples of the earth.

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The body-politic today is greatly in need of a physician. It is similar to a human body afflicted with nervous ailments. A doctor diagnoses the case and then prescribes treatment. He does not prescribe, however, until he has made the diagnosis. The disease which afflicts the body-politic is lack of love and absence of altruism. In the hearts of men no real love is found, and the condition is such that unless their susceptibilities are quickened by some power so that unity, love and accord may develop within them, there can be no healing, no agreement among mankind. Love and unity are the needs of the body-politic today. Without these no progress or prosperity can be attained. Therefore the friends of God must adhere to the power which will create this love and unity in the hearts of the sons of men. Science cannot cure the illness of the body-politic. Science cannot create amity and fellowship in human hearts. Neither can patriotism nor racial prejudice effect a remedy. It must be accomplished solely through the divine bounties and spiritual bestowals which have descended from God, in this day,

for that purpose. This is an exigency of the times, and the divine remedy has been provided. For the spiritual teachings of the religion of God can alone create this love, unity and accord in human hearts. . . .

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Although the body-politic is one family, yet because of the lack of symmetry some members are comfortable and some are in the utmost misery; some members are satisfied and some are hungry; some are clothed with the most costly garments while some families are in need of food and shelter. Why? Because this family has not that reciprocity and symmetry needed. This household is not well arranged. . . . Is it possible for a member of a family to be subjected to the utmost of misery and abject poverty, and for the rest of the family to be comfortable? It is impossible, unless the rest of the family be without feeling, having become spiritually atrophied, inhospitable, unkind. . . .

The purport is this, that as we are all inhabitants of the same earth, in reality we are one family, and each one of us is a member of that family. Therefore we must all live in the utmost of happiness and comfort under a just rule and regulation in accordance with the laws of God, because this life is fleeting, and if man looks after himself only, he is no better than the animal, for the animal alone is to that degree egotistic. On the contrary man should be willing to accept hardships for himself in order

that others may be happy. . . . This is characteristic of man, this is becoming to man. . . . Such a man is the honor of the world of humanity; such a man is the glory of the world of mankind; such a man is he who wins eternal bliss; such a man is nearer the Threshold of God; such a man is the very manifestation of eternal happiness. . . .

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The most glorious attainment is the understanding of this great saying: All beings are the fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch, the drops of one sea. Honor is for him who loveth men, not for him who loveth his own.

(Bahá'u'lláh)

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O thou daughter of the Kingdom! The Lord of the Kingdom and the Sun of Truth hath sent forth a splendor and effulgence upon the world and the universe. All the contingent things found life and existence from the rays of that effulgence, entered and became manifest in the arena of being. Therefore all the objective phenomena are as surfaces of mirrors upon which the Sun of Truth hath cast the rays of the outpouring of bounty. All these surfaces (different stages of life) are mirrors reflecting the rays of the Sun of Truth. The outpouring is the One outpouring and the effulgence is the One effulgence. These complex and diversified mirrors are different from one another. Some of them are

in a state of the utmost purity and clearness, reflecting the rays of the Sun of Truth, and the effulgence of the Luminary is manifest and visible in them. On the other hand there are mirrors full of dust and therefore dark; consequently, they are deprived and bereft of any radiation.

The believers of God are the translucent mirrors who, with the utmost purity and clearness, are reflecting the rays of the Orb of regions. Other communities are being darkened and bedimmed like unto stone and adamant. This condition is especially true of the people of hostility, animosity, oppression and tyranny, and the fanatical ones, who, on account of the accumulation of dust (prejudice) have become like unto the black stone, into which the rays of the sun do not penetrate and from which no light radiates.

Now we must not consider nor recognize these mirrors, which are deprived of every gift, as strangers and foreigners, neither should we speak of nor know them as enemies or savages; nay rather, must we recognize them as the members of our body, showing them love and affection; not as strangers, but as associates; not as foreigners, but as friends. One must become engaged in their training and education, sympathize with and show pity to them and lead them into the heavenly characteristics, in order that the accumulated dust may disappear from the surface of those mirrors and the shining rays of the Sun of Truth radiate from them.

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O Son of Man! In My ancient entity and in My eternal being was I hidden. I knew my love in thee, therefore I created thee; upon thee I laid My image, and to thee revealed My beauty.

O Son of Man! I loved thy creation, therefore I created thee. . . .

(Bahá'u'lláh)

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We declare that love is the cause of the existence of all phenomena and that the absence of love is the cause of disintegration or non-existence. Love is the conscious bestowal of God,—the bond of affiliation in all phenomena. We will first consider the proof of this through sense-perception: As we look upon the universe we observe that all composite beings or existing phenomena are made up primarily of single elements bound together by a power of attraction. Through this power of attraction, cohesion has become manifest between the atoms of these composing elements. The resultant being is a phenomenon of the lower contingent type. The power of cohesion expressed in the mineral kingdom is in reality love or affinity manifested in a low degree according to the exigencies of the mineral world. We take a step higher into the vegetable kingdom where we find an increased power of attraction has become manifest among the composing elements which make up the body of a plant. Therefore in the degree of the vegetable kingdom there is love. We enter the animal kingdom and

find the attractive power binding together single elements as in the mineral, plus the cellular admixture as in the vegetable, plus the phenomena of feelings or susceptibilities. We observe that the animals are susceptible to certain affiliation and fellowship, and that they exercise natural selection. This elemental attraction, this admixture and selective affinity is love manifest in the degree of the animal kingdom.

Finally we come to the kingdom of man. As this is the superior kingdom, the light of love is more resplendent. In man we find the power of attraction among the elements which compose his material body, plus the attraction which produces cellular admixture or power augmentative, plus the attraction which characterizes the sensibilities of the animal kingdom, but still beyond and above all these lower powers we discover in the being of man the attraction of heart, the susceptibilities and affinities which bind men together, enabling them to live and associate in friendship and solidarity. It is therefore evident that in the world of humanity, the greatest king and sovereign is Love. If love were extinguished, the power of attraction dispelled, the affinity of human hearts destroyed, the phenomena of human life would disappear.

This is a proof perceptible to the senses, acceptable to reason, in accord with traditions and teachings of the holy books and verified by the promptings of human hearts themselves. It is a proof



upon which we can absolutely rely and declare to be complete.

But these are only degrees of love which exist in the natural or physical world. Their manifestation is ever according to the requirement of natural conditions and standards. Real love is the love which exists between God and his servants,—the love which binds together holy souls. This is the love of the spiritual world, not the love of the physical bodies and organisms. For example, consider and observe how the bestowals of God successively descend upon mankind; how the divine effulgences ever shine upon the human world! There can be no doubt that these bestowals, these bounties, these effulgences emanate from love. Unless love be the divine motive, it would be impossible for the heart of man to attain or receive them. Unless love exists the divine blessing could not descend upon any object or thing. Unless there be love the recipient of divine effulgence could not radiate and reflect that effulgence upon other objects. If we are of those who perceive we realize that the bounties of God manifest themselves continuously, even as the rays of the sun unceasingly emanate from the solar center. The phenomenal world through the resplendent effulgence of the sun is radiant and bright. In the same way the realm of hearts and spirits is illumined and resuscitated through the shining rays of the Sun of Reality and the bounties of the love of God. Thereby the world of existence, the kingdom

of hearts and spirits, is ever quickened into life. Were it not for the love of God, hearts would be inanimate, spirits would wither and the reality of man would be bereft of the everlasting bestowal.

Consider to what extent the love of God makes itself manifest. Among the signs of his love which appear in the world are the dawning-points of his Manifestations. What an infinite degree of love is reflected by the divine Manifestations toward mankind! For the sake of guiding the people they have willingly forfeited their lives to resuscitate human hearts. They have accepted the cross. To enable human souls to attain the supreme degree of advancement they have suffered during their limited years extreme ordeals and difficulties. If his holiness Jesus Christ had not possessed love for the world of humanity surely he would not have welcomed the cross. He was crucified for the love of mankind. Consider the infinite degree of that love! Without love for humanity John the Baptist would not have offered his life. It has been likewise with all the prophets and holy souls. If his holiness the Bab had not manifested love for mankind surely he would not have offered his breast for a thousand bullets. If his holiness Bahá'u'lláh had not been aflame with love for humanity, he would not have willingly accepted forty years imprisonment.

Observe how rarely human souls sacrifice their pleasure or comfort for others; how improbable that a man would offer his eye or suffer himself to be dismembered for the benefit of another. Yet

all the divine Manifestations suffered, offered their lives and blood, sacrificed their existence, comfort and all they possessed for mankind. Therefore consider how much they love! Were it not for their illumination human souls would not be radiant. How effective is their love! This is a sign of the love of God; a ray of the Sun of Reality. . . .

Consider then what the love of God means. Were it not for the love of God all the spirits would be inanimate. The meaning of this is not physical death; nay rather it is that condition concerning which his holiness Christ declared, "Let the dead bury their dead; for that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of spirit is spirit." Were it not for the love of God the hearts would not be illumined. Were it not for the love of God the pathway of the Kingdom would not be opened. Were it not for the love of God the holy books would not have been revealed. Were it not for the love of God the divine prophets would not have been sent to the world. The foundation of all these bestowals is the love of God. Therefore in the human world there is no greater power than the love of God.

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. . . Love is greater than peace, for peace is founded upon love. Love is the objective point of peace; peace is an outcome of love. Until love obtains, peace cannot be; but you may have peace without love. The love which is from God is the fun-

damental. This love is the object of all human attainment, the radiance of heaven, the light of man.

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O thou who art attracted by the fragrances of God! Know thou assuredly that—

Love is the mystery of divine revelation;

Love is the effulgent manifestation;

Love is the spiritual fulfillment;

Love is the light of the Kingdom;

Love is the breath of the Holy Spirit inspired into the human spirit;

Love is the cause of the Manifestation of the Truth (God) in the phenomenal world;

Love is the necessary tie proceeding from the realities of things through divine creation;

Love is the means of the most great happiness in both the material and spiritual worlds;

Love is a light of guidance in the dark night;

Love is the bond between the Creator and the creature in the inner world;

Love is the cause of development to every enlightened man;

Love is the greatest law in this vast universe of God;

Love is the one law which causes and controls order among the existing atoms;

Love is the universal magnetic power between the planets and the stars shining in the lofty firmament;

Love is the cause of unfoldment, to a searching

mind, of the secrets deposited in the universe by the Infinite;

Love is the spirit of life in the bountiful body of the world;

Love is the cause of the civilization of nations in this mortal world;

Love is the highest honor to every righteous nation.

The people who are confirmed therein are indeed glorified by the Supreme Concourse, the angels of heaven and the dwellers in the Kingdom of El-Abha. But, if the hearts of the people become void of the divine grace—the *love of God*—they wander in the desert of ignorance, descend to the depths of ruin and fall to the abyss of despair where there is no refuge. They are like insects living on the lowest plane.

This is the path of El-Baha.

This is the religion of El-Baha.

This is the law of El-Baha.

He who has not this has no portion with El-Baha.

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The cause of the creation of the contingent world was love. As it is mentioned in the well known tradition which says, "I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known; so I created the creation that I should be known"; therefore it is necessary that all should unite in the religion of the love of God, in such a way that not the slightest breeze of difference among the friends and companions should

blow. All, fixing their gaze upon love, should move in perfect union so that no difference among any of them could be observed. In good and evil, in gain and loss, in adversity and prosperity, all should partake. . . .

(Bahá'u'lláh)

'Abdu'l-Bahá said there are five kinds of love :

First: The love of his own perfections which caused God to create that his beauty might be made manifest and appreciated.

Second: The love between sanctified souls for the attributes of the divine which they see reflected in one another.

Third: God's love to man individually that is gained according to the measure in which a man turns to God.

Fourth: Man's love for God, the Creator. This is the cause of his life, progress and happiness.

Fifth: The love of self, which if directed to the ego will deprive man of all true development, but if the love of self is a realization that one is a creature of God and must therefore attain to the station appointed for him, this love will be an uplifting one.

Among the human race, the bonds of, and means for, love are numerous, for man cannot live without it; nay rather, human life is dependent upon friendship and affection. Both the material and in-

trinsic development of man are conditional upon amity and love and the greatest honor and pleasure in the human world is love; but the ways and means are different. Sometimes the cause of love is simply relationship and kinship: and sometimes it is a racial bond, patriotism, political affairs, etc. But through all these various bonds and means it is impossible to obtain a real and pure love: it is rather superficial and temporary. Such love may easily be changed into enmity and rancor, for it is affected by the slightest manifestation of hostility; whereas a true and ideal love is faith and assurance. Those who believe in God and are confident in his word shall enter the Kingdom, and the essential oneness appear from among them to such an extent that all become the drops of one ocean, the rays of one sun, the fishes of one sea, the trees of one garden, the birds of one orchard, the candles of one assembly and the stars of the same heaven. Such love is real; there is no interruption for this connection, nor any separation for this union. This foundation shall never be destroyed, for it is eternal. Hence it is established that the love which exists among the beloved of God is everlasting for it is a divine bounty, a godly appearance, a melody of the Kingdom and a heavenly cohesion. In the Koran it is said: "They love him and he loves them"—i. e., the bounty of love is one of the divine bounties which comes to man from God, just as the sun sends its rays to the mirrors and thereby the mirrors are illumined: this effulgence and splendor are from the

bounty of the sun. Therefore, this love which is among the beloved is a divine bounty, a godly splendor, an eternal manifestation and the power of divinity: it is perpetual.

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That which is most delicious in the world of existence is love. The air of itself is not delicious, neither is water, nor in short, all the elements; but when coupled with love they are most delicious. Love is the best condiment. When love exists in the heart the slightest gesture proves welcome. When love exists in the heart, even if it be a blow it is delicious.

For instance: the food on this table is nothing, indeed very simple; yet because it is prompted by love it is delicious.

The Lord's supper of Christ was indeed a very common thing, but because there was excessive love among the individual members who convened there, that table surpassed the royal tables and it was established as the Lord's Supper. Even now, at this time, it is known as such. This was due to the love which existed between Jesus Christ and the disciples.

. . . The protestant missionaries were amazed at our love, and they were greatly disturbed and grieved exceedingly over it. They wonder what has cemented the Americans and Persians! . . . They do not know that the factor is the love of God and that it has united us.

The disciples of Christ represented many differ-



ent nations and climes. One was a Hebrew; another a Syrian and another a Roman. How God, through his love, cemented their hearts! Even so it is now! It is the love of God which has connected us, so that in the utmost love do we assemble and are gathered together here.

The means for friendliness are multitudinous.

There is the family bond which is the cause of love. There is the patriotic bond which is a basis for love. There is the racial cause which is a source of love. There is the political one which is the cause of love and unity. Partnership in business is one sort of connection.

But there is no bond like the love of God, for the love of God is the bond eternal, and outside of it there are only temporary ones.

The love of God is that peculiar bond which is not subject to corruption; whereas, other bonds, other loves, are subject to instantaneous corruptive changes. For the least cause such another love might be changed into hate. It owes its origin to a cause; when the cause is removed, the effect will likewise disappear.

But the love of God is not dependent upon material causes. For example, our assemblage here is absolutely free from any of the petty causes.

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There are two kinds of love, one universal and one individual. You must love humanity in order to uplift and help humanity. Even if they kill you,

you must love them. Individual love cannot be forced and you are not called upon to love everybody personally, but if they are in your lives see to it that they are means of your development and that you are means of their development through your universal love for them.

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Question: "How can one love another whose personality is unpleasant?"

Answer: "We are creatures of the same God. We must therefore love all as children of God even though they are doing us harm. Christ loved his persecutors. It is possible for us to attain to that love. God manifested his love by creating man in his own image. Man must manifest his love by developing himself and others more and more in the image of God. The true fruit of man is, therefore, love. The purpose of a tree is to produce fruit. Man is like a tree; his fruit should be love."

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I met a man this morning who belongs to a sect of Buddhists and I said to him, "What is your message?" He replied, "l'Amour—Love!" I said, "Yes, but what beside that?" He repeated, "Love, that is all, that is the only message."

But the word love is not a message; the word indicates an infinite thing and how shall we bring an infinite thing into relation with humanity which is finite?

There are in reality many kinds of love, and each in itself is limited and finite. There is the love of country, or the patriotic love, there is the family love, there is the love of friendship, the love of man and woman—each one is finite and limited. There is only one love which is unlimited and divine, and that is the love which comes with the breath of the Holy Spirit—the love of God—which breaks all barriers and sweeps all before it.

Animals are completely subject to nature, they are its slaves. They live and die in the places in which they are born, they are the victims of storm and flood, they are hemmed in by desert, forest, by the great rivers and the sea.

But man has conquered nature and is free. He is no longer the slave of the physical world, he dominates it and is free. He compels the physical world to do his will. He crosses wide spaces, sails over the ocean, and is beginning to fly through the air. He is in all things a freed being, and can give his commands to that nature in the midst of which he was born.

So man, who is freed from material things and dominates nature, should learn to render his love also unlimited and divine. He should open his soul to the breeze of God that it may blow through him and break down all barriers.

So, if you love, endeavor to love divinely. If you love your country, love it not with the narrow feeling that it must be loved because it is yours alone, but with the greater consciousness that your

home is a part of the universe. If you love brother or comrade or wife, love each one as a part of God, and not in the narrow sense of possession which renders the love selfish and exclusive. Then the breeze of God blowing constantly through your love will purify it and make it divine so that the breath of the Holy Spirit will enter into your being and unite you to God.

But do not seek the honors and loves of this world, seek rather God and his love, and then the honors and loves which belong to him will be yours. All the glory of the heavens is his, all the beauty of the flowers, the scent of the roses and the colors of the sunset. But more than this the beauty of the soul is his, so that when you look long upon his beauty, it takes many forms and re-appears in your consciousness in many figures. But all other beauty fades and disappears, all other honor but his becomes insignificant, all other love but his is undesirable.

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. . . The object of the dawn of the Morn of Guidance and the effulgence of the Sun of Reality have been no other than the inculcation of the utmost love among the children of men and perfect good-fellowship between the individuals of mankind. Therefore, in the beginning the foundation of this love and unity must be laid among the believers of God, and then permeate through the nations of the

world. Therefore as much as you can be ye kind towards one another, and likewise to others. The first melody of the Kingdom is the song of the love of God, and the love of God is realized in the universal love of all humanity. . . .

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The world is black; the divine bestowal is radiant. This blackness must be changed into light, and this narrow, dark sphere must be transformed into a vast, illimitable universe of illumination. The body of the world is like a corpse; it must be resuscitated. It is withered; it must be made fresh and blooming. It is extinct; it must be enkindled. It is the arena for the expression of animosity; it must be made the dawning-place of love and good-fellowship. It is the place of origin for the emanation of contention; we must make it the axis around which revolves unity. It is the expression of the baser qualities which lead to eternal disgrace; we must make it the rising-point of the refulgent rays of the everlasting glory. The strangers must be instructed in the lesson of neighborliness; and the heedless made aware; the enemies must be loved, and the hateful ones be shown kindness. We must become flaming torches and the burning fire of God. We must move this world and illumine this dark globe. All this depends upon the effort of the friends and the sacrifice of the beloved ones.

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. . . Radiate the light of the love of God to such an extent as to be able to remove entirely the gloom and darkness of hatred, bigotry and enmity from among humanity. Know all mankind of all nations, sects and tribes as your kith and kin. Consider not their deeds, but only God. Seek your reward from him and not from them. Know the aged of all nations as your fathers, the youths as your brothers and the children as your own. No matter what lack of courtesy or what severe persecution or stern expressions of hate and unfathomable enmity you receive, you must have no excuse like the following: "So and so has spoken unkindly about me." "So and so has not done me justice,"—nay, rather you must have no excuse but live according to the divine teachings, whether humanity prove agreeable or disagreeable, whether it receives you or casts you out, so that perchance you may be assisted in hoisting the standard of peace and pitching the tabernacle of oneness and solidarity of the world of humanity—so that this temporal life may ultimate in the Life Everlasting, and this darkness of ignorance which has pervaded the whole world may be converted into the illumination of guidance. . . .

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When a man turns his face to God he finds sunshine everywhere. All men are his brothers. Let not conventionality cause you to seem cold and unsympathetic when you meet strange people from

other countries. Do not look at them as though you suspected them of being evil-doers, thieves and boors, or that you think it necessary to be very careful, not to expose yourself to the risk of making acquaintance with such, possibly undesirable, people.

I ask you not to think only of yourselves. Be kind to the strangers, whether they come from Turkey, Japan, Persia, Russia, China or any other country in the world.

Help to make them feel at home; find out where they are staying, ask if you may render them any service; try to make their lives a little happier.

In this way, even if, sometimes, what you first suspected should be true, still go out of your way to be kind to them—this kindness will help them to become better.

After all, why should any foreign people be treated as strangers? . . . Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone, let your heart burn with loving-kindness for all who may cross your path.

O you of the western nations! Be kind to those who come from the eastern world to sojourn among you. Forget your conventionality when you speak with them; they are not accustomed to it. To eastern people this demeanor seems cold, unfriendly. Rather let your manner be sympathetic. Let it be seen that you are filled with universal love. When you meet a Persian or any other stranger, speak to him as to a friend; if he seems to be lonely try to help him, give him of your willing service; if he be

sad console him, if poor succor him, if oppressed rescue him, if in misery comfort him. In so doing you will manifest that not in words only, but in deed and in truth, you think of all men as your brothers.

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. . . All the infinite beings exist by this law of mutual action and helpfulness. Should this law of joint interchange of forces be removed from the arena of life, existence would be entirely destroyed.

When we ponder deeply on the connection and interdependence of beings we clearly realize that life of every being draws benefit and sustenance from all the other innumerable existences. This mutual helpfulness is realized either directly or through mediation and if, for the twinkling of an eye, this confirmation and assistance does not descend upon the living being, that one will become non-existent, for all the existing things are linked together and draw help from each other. Therefore, the greatest foundation of the world of existence is this co-operation and mutuality.

Liken the world of existence to the temple of man. All the limbs assist one another; therefore life continues. When, in this wonderful organism, there is a disconnection, life is changed into death and the parts of the body disintegrate. Likewise, among the parts of existence there is a wonderful connection and interchange of forces, which is the



cause of the life of the world and the continuation of these countless phenomena.

When one considers the living beings and the growing plants, he realizes that the animal and man sustain life by inhaling the emanations from the vegetable world, and this fiery element is called oxygen. The vegetable kingdom also draws life from the living creatures in the substance called carbon. In brief, the beings of sensation acquire life from the growing beings and in turn the growing things receive life from the sensitive creatures. Therefore this interchange of forces and inter-communication is continual and uninterrupted.

From this illustration one can see the base of life is this mutual aid and helpfulness and the cause of destruction and non-existence would be the interruption of this mutual assistance. The more the world aspires to civilization the more this most important matter of co-operation and assistance becomes manifest. Therefore in the world of humanity one sees this matter of helpfulness attain to a high degree of efficiency; so much so that the continuance of humanity entirely depends upon this inter-relation. . . .

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If you desire to love God, love thy fellow-men. In them you can see the image and likeness of God. If you are eager to serve God, serve mankind. Renounce the self in the Self of God. When the aerial mariner steers his airship skyward, little by little the

in harmony and incongruity of the world of matter are lost, and before his astonished vision he sees widespread the wonderful panorama of God's creation. Likewise when the student of the path of Reality has attained to the loftiest summit of divine love, he will not look upon the ugliness and misery of mankind; he will not observe any differences; he will not see any racial and patriotic differences; but he will look upon humanity with the glorified vision of a seer and a prophet. Let us all strive that we may attain to this highest pinnacle of ideal and spiritual life.

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Holding out in his hand, a piece of very thin paper before his eyes, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "See what a slight thing will shut off our physical sight; so will a slight indiscretion, a cross word, an adverse criticism shut off the delicate spiritual sight."

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Question: "How can we love our enemies; it is so hard?"

Answer: "There are two kinds of love: one is direct love which proceeds from a person to another person; the other is indirect love—that is to love an object for another's sake. Now we must love our enemies for God's sake and because he has created them; we must love them and not for their own personality. For instance, if your beloved sends you a rose, you appreciate it, kiss it and it is valuable to

you. This love is not regarding the personality of the thing itself, but for the sake of the one who has sent it to you. We must love the house for its owner's sake."

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. . . Treat ye the sinners, the tyrants and the blood-thirsty enemies as the faithful friends and the confidants of the heart. In truth ye must become the embodiment of benevolence and the expression of grace. Do not look upon the "worth" and "merit" of the people. In former ages and cycles, the command of love and non-resistance had been revealed. But there was a pretext among the people,—“merit” and “de-merit.” They would say this person is contumacious and a hypocrite and that person is blood-thirsty and cruel. And if any one practiced forgiveness that forgiveness was coupled with blame and reproach. But in this dispensation, all these pretexts are dispelled and real love and kindness with all the soul and heart to all the nations of the earth is the absolute law. . . .

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Christ came for the promulgation of the law of love; all the prophets were sent, all the Books were revealed, so that the law of love might be promoted. But a few self-seeking people subverted the original aims of the religion of God, changed its pure current and made it an instrument of hatred and rancor and quarrel and sedition. Why should we

hate the members of other religions? Why should we not love one another?

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When the Arabs observed Mohammed's charity toward the orphans and unprotected, his extreme simplicity and democratic attitude toward all mankind, they used to say: "He is in love with his Maker." One of the sayings of the Prophet (Mohammed) is: "Do you love your Creator? Love your fellow-beings first." In another place he says: "That man who is most considerate of his kind is the favorite of God." In another place he says: "How do you think God will know you when you are in his presence? By your love of your children, of your kin, of your neighbors, of your fellow-creatures." . . .

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We were commanded by Bahá'u'lláh to assist all the communities without the exclusion of any one. We do not consider their deeds and actions. We never lose sight of the fact that mankind are the children of God and their wants must be relieved without distinction of race or religion.

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In every dispensation the command of friendship and the law of love have been revealed, but it has been circumscribed within the circle of the believing friends and not with contrary enemies. Praise be

to God, that in this wonderful cycle the laws of God are not confined within any limitations, neither must they be exercised toward a special community to the exclusion of another. He hath commanded all the friends to show love, friendship, amity and kindness to all the people of the world.

## CHAPTER VI

### TESTS

**A**S many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

(Revelation 3: 19)

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Today, O lord, deliver us from all temptations, tests and evil suggestions of those who have turned their faces from thee: Then, O thou merciful God, confirm us through thine invisible hosts, and reinforce us through thy heavenly angels.

O Lord! We are weak, poor, submissive and humble: Strengthen us, enrich us and uplift us above all earthly conditions. O thou God! As thou hast illumined our hearts with the light of knowing thee, make us firm in thy blessed Covenant. Verily, thou art the clement, the forgiver!

(Bahá'u'lláh)

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I am not impatient of calamities, in God's way, nor of afflictions for his love and at his good pleasure. God hath made affliction as a morning shower

to this green pasture and as a match for his lamp whereby earth and heaven are illumined.

(Bahá'u'lláh)

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“O son of man! If calamity befall thee not in My path, how wilt thou tread in the way of those who are content in My will? If affliction overtake thee not in thy longing to meet Me, how canst thou attain the light of the love of My Beauty.”

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“O son of man! My calamity is My providence. In appearance it is fire and vengeance; in reality it is light and mercy. Therefore approach it, that thou mayest become an eternal light and an immortal spirit. This is My command; know thou it.”

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“O son of humanity! Rejoice not if fortune smile upon thee, and if humiliation overtake thee, mourn not because of it, for, in their time, they both shall cease and be no more.”

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“O son of existence! If thou encounter poverty, grieve not; for, in time, the King of riches will descend to thee. Fear not humiliation, for glory shall be thy portion.”

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"O son of existence! Be not engrossed with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We try the servants."

(Bahá'u'lláh)

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The more one is severed from the world, from desires, from human affairs and conditions, the more impervious does one become to the tests of God. Tests are a means by which a soul is measured as to its fitness, and proven out by its own acts. God knows its fitness beforehand, and also its unpreparedness, but man, with an ego, would not believe himself unfit unless proof were given him. Consequently his susceptibility to evil is proven to him when he falls into the tests, and the tests are continued until the soul realizes its own unfitness, then remorse and regret tend to root out the weakness. The same test comes again in greater degree, until it is shown that a former weakness has become a strength, and the power to overcome evil has been established.

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Thou hast questioned concerning ordeals and difficulties and catastrophies: "Are these from God or the result of man's (own) evil deeds?"

Know thou that ordeals are of two kinds: One kind is for trial (to test the soul), and the other is punishment for actions. ("As a man soweth so shall he also reap.") That which is for testing is



educational and developmental and that which is the punishment of deeds is severe retribution.

The father and the teacher sometimes humor the children and then again discipline them. This discipline is for educational purposes and is indeed to give them true happiness; it is absolute kindness and true providence. Although in appearance it is wrath yet in reality it is kindness. Although outwardly it is an ordeal yet inwardly it is purifying water.

Verily, in both cases we must supplicate and implore and commune to the divine Threshold in order to be patient in ordeals.

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O ye friends of God! The joy and happiness of the people of faithfulness consist in serving the Threshold of the Most High and turning their faces to the Kingdom of Abha. The hope of the lovers is self-sacrificing and the yearning of the longing ones is self-effacement and evanescence. For love is an irresistible power and an inextinguishable conflagration and the mirror of the love of God is the great martyrdom. Therefore, the sanctified souls and the Manifestations of God yearned for self-abnegation and attainment to the city of martyrdom. They gave up their lives, experienced exile and banishment, endured persecution and dire calamities, became subject to imprisonment and bondage and the targets of the arrows of oppression and objects of the sword of malice. They did not complain:

neither did they become disheartened. They drank the cup of martyrdom from the hand of the Cup-bearer of Providence and tasted with the greatest joy the sweetness of annihilation. They found not a moment of rest. They sought not an instant of tranquillity. They withstood the persecution of the enemies and became the centers of the derision and scoffing of the people of envy. They sacrificed their homes and property and became homeless and wanderers. They experienced not one hour of safety nor a day of repose of mind and body. This is the proof of the sincere lover and this is the evidence of the faithful friend. If it were not so every stranger would become a friend and the deprived one would become the confidant of the mysteries, the remote one would become the near one and the outcast would become the beloved. Consequently the most great wisdom has ordained that the fire of tests shall rage and the rushing torrent of ordeals sweep tumultuously from the mountain of revelation, so that the untruthful may become distinguished from the truthful, the unrighteous be known from the righteous, the worshipper of self be separated from the worshipper of God, the good fruit be set apart from the evil fruit, the signs of light be manifest and gloom of darkness be dispelled, the nightingale of trustworthiness sing the melody of love and the raven of oppression croak the discordant notes of error, the fertile soil become green and verdant and the barren ground produce its thorns and thistles, the ones attracted to the breath of Abha become

firm and the followers of passion and desire turn away. This is the wisdom of trials and this is the cause of ordeals.

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Thy detailed letter was received. Its perusal produced the utmost happiness for it revealed the fact that thou hast attained to the knowledge of the reality of tests; namely, that tests endured in the path of God are conducive to confirmation, nay, rather, they are heavenly powers and the bounties of the realm of Might. But to the weak believers tests are trials and examination, for, on account of the weakness of their faith and assurance they fall into difficulties and vicissitudes. However, to those souls who are firm and steadfast, tests are the greatest favors.

Consider thou that at the time of an examination in sciences and arts, the dull and lazy pupil finds himself in calamity. But to the intelligent and sagacious student, examination in learning produces honor and infinite happiness. Alloyed gold subjected to the fire portrays its baseness, while the intensity of the flame enhances the beauty of the (pure) gold. Therefore, tests to the weak souls are calamity and to the veiled ones the cause of their disgrace and humiliation.

The point is this, that in the path of Truth every difficulty is made plain and every trial is a matchless bounty.

Therefore, the believers of God and the maid-

servants of the Merciful must not relax during trials, and no disaster must deter their service in the Cause of God.

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That soul is alone who is negligent of God. But if he knows God, although he may live in an interminable desert without water and vegetation yet he is not alone,—God is with him. The sky of this terrestrial globe is always obscure and misty and covered with black, inky clouds. Now the thunder rolls and anon the lightning flashes. Now the hail falls and again the snow descends. Now there is a wild hurricane and then a tempestuous torrent rushing down from the mountain side. Therefore, do not think for one moment that these trials and ordeals are confined to thee. In reality all the people are surrounded with sufferings so that they may not attach their hearts to the world, but will seek for composure and rest in the divine world and beg for the bestowal of the Kingdom. Consequently be thou glad from the bottom of thy heart and be rejoiced through the divine glad-tidings.

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As to trials (tests in the path of God), verily, they are necessary. Hast thou not heard and read how there appeared trials from God in the day of Jesus, and thereafter, and how the whirlwind of tests became severe? Even the glorious Peter was not rescued from the flame of trials, and wavered.

Then he repented and mourned the mourning of a bereaved one and his lamentations raised unto the Supreme Concourse. Is it, then, possible to be saved from the trials of God? No, verily. There is a great wisdom therein of which no one is aware save the wise and knowing. Were it not for tests, genuine gold could not be distinguished from the counterfeit. Were it not for tests, the courageous could not be known from the coward. Were it not for tests, the people of faithfulness could not be known from those of selfishness. Were it not for tests, the intellects and faculties of the scholars in the great colleges would not be developed. Were it not for tests, the sparkling gems could not be known from worthless pebbles. Were it not for tests, the fisherman could not be distinguished from Annas and Caiaphas who were amid glory (worldly dignity).

Were it not for tests the face of Mary, the Magdalene, would not glisten with the light of firmness and certainty unto all the horizons. These are some of the mysteries of tests which we have unfolded unto thee that thou mayest become cognizant of the mysteries of God in every cycle. Verily, I pray God to illumine the faces as pure gold in the fire of tests.

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Be thou resolute and steadfast. When the tree is firmly rooted it will bear fruit, therefore it is not permitted to be agitated by any test. Be thou not

disheartened! Be thou not discouraged! The trials of God are many, but if man remains firm and steadfast the test itself is a stepping-stone for the progress of humanity.

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The rain does not stop. I have been intending every day to go up the mountain, but I have been detained on account of the rain. This is the rainy season. If the rain does not pour down, if the wind does not blow, if the storm and tempest do not rage, the soul-refreshing springtime will not appear. If the clouds do not weep the meadows will not laugh. The hurricane and tornado, the cyclone and the blast are the harbingers of the spring.

Likewise, were there no tests and trials, no hardships and afflictions the attraction of the hearts could not be realized, the spiritual fragrances could not be obtained, nor could merciful happiness be acquired and the beauties of the celestial springtime would not have been disclosed.

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If the daily living become difficult, soon thy Lord will bestow upon thee that which shall satisfy thee. Be patient in the time of affliction and trial, endure every difficulty and hardship with a dilated heart, attracted spirit and eloquent tongue in remembrance of the Merciful. Verily, this is the life of satisfaction, of spiritual existence, heavenly repose, divine benediction and of the celestial table. Soon thy

Lord will extenuate thy straightened circumstances even in this world.

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Thou has manifested joy at the freedom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This happiness came from thy great love. There is no doubt that the friends have become joyful on account of the liberation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. But I was thankful for this prison in the path of God and the lack of liberty was very pleasing to me, for those days were passed in the path of the love of God with the utmost difficulty and trials, bearing fruits and results. Unless one accept suffering, undergo trials and endure vicissitudes he will reap no reward nor will he attain success and prosperity. Therefore, thou must likewise endure great tests so that the infinite divine outpourings may encircle thee and that thou mayest be assisted in spreading the fragrances of God. Behold the apostles of His Highness, Christ! They accepted all trials and persecutions and received all kinds of oppression and trouble until they became assisted by great bestowals and confirmed in the guidance of the people.

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My happiness was complete in those dark days of imprisonment and vicissitude. I was happier than now, because I had no will of my own. I was perfectly resigned. The life of this world is only a few days. Whether happy or unhappy, in freedom or in bonds, healthy or ill, in comfort or in pov-

erty,—they will pass away. The one who is established on the throne and the one sitting on the mat—both will cease to exist here.

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It is difficult for the weak ones to endure the tests but for souls like thee, it is very easy. It is my hope that during the time of tests thou mayest remain in the utmost firmness and steadfastness, so that like unto a lamp thou mayest be protected within the glass, and be not extinguished by the blowing of winds.

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The higher our station is, the nearer we are to God and the more severe do our tests become; when we have received great blessings, we are apt to become self-confident and think that we are secure from falling, and then is our danger great.

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Rest assured in the protection of God. He will preserve his own children under all circumstances. Be ye not afraid nor be ye agitated. He holds the scepter of power in his hand, and like unto a hen he gathereth his chickens under his wings. "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the sun. A time to be born, and a time to die, a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to keep silent and a time to speak." Now,



friends, this is the time of assurance and faith and not fear and dread.

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These people who called on us today were in a state of fright. They are expecting daily the bombardment of Haifa by the foreign warships. As soon as they see a little moving speck in the horizon of the sea, they look through their glasses, anxiously scanning to see whether these are the expected cruisers. Their hearts are in a state of anxiety. They are terror-stricken. They have no peace of mind. This is one of the signs of absence of faith. It is stated in the Koran: "They imagine every cry raised is an enemy unto them." For example, when a thief enters a house, the least noise causes his flight. He trembles and quakes.

But the hearts of the people of faith are assured. If they are surrounded by a thousand enemies they stand firm on their ground. The greatest divine bounty is a confident heart. When the heart is confident, all the trials of the world will be as child's play. Should they throw him into prison, should they cast him into a black well, should they heap upon him all manner of afflictions, still his heart is content, peaceful and assured.

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To enter the Kingdom is easy, but to remain firm and constant is difficult. The planting of trees is

easy but their cultivation and training to strengthen their roots and to make them firm is difficult. Now, as thou art a firm tree, thou shalt certainly grow and send out branches, leaves and blossoms and bear fruits. These branches, leaves, blossoms and fruits are the souls who may be guided, through the providence of God, by thee.

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Man must seek to gain the acceptance of God and not that of the different classes of men. If one is praised and chosen by God, the accusation of all the creatures will cause no loss to him; and if a man is not accepted at the Threshold of God the praise and admiration of all men will be of no use to him.

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Be not sorrowful on account of the affliction of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, for calamity is a light whereby his face glistens among the Supreme Concourse; affliction is healing to his breast, joy to his heart, happiness to his soul; nay, rather, a most honored garment upon his temple, best gown upon his body, and dearest crown on his head. This is his utmost desire.

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Ye have expressed words of solicitude and anxiety over the troubles and persecutions which have fallen upon this imprisoned one. Do not be at all sad, be ye not affected. Do not worry, for incarceration to this prisoner is a feast of bliss and a perpetual

paradise. Persecutions and adversities are the merciful gifts. If these persecutions and sufferings did not exist in the path of God, how could 'Abdu'l-Bahá obtain happiness and peace? Through the appearance of tests, my heart is consoled, and through the experiencing of dire afflictions my soul is calmed.

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Grieve not at the divine trials. Be not troubled because of hardships and ordeals; turn unto God, bowing in humbleness and praying to him, while bearing every ordeal, contented under all conditions and thankful in every difficulty. Verily, thy Lord loveth his maid-servants who are patient, believing and firm. He draws them nigh to him through these ordeals and trials.

Be not sorrowful on account of the departure of thy good son. He hath indeed departed from this narrow and gloomy world which is darkened by unlimited sorrow, unto the Kingdom which is spacious, illumined, joyous and beautiful. God delivered him from this dark well and promoted him unto the Supreme Height! He gave him wings whereby he soared to the heaven of happiness. Verily, this is the great mercy from him who is precious and forgiving.

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We are living in a day when so many people rely wholly or solely upon matter. They imagine that the size of a great ship, that the perfection of the

machinery or the skill of a captain will ensure the safety of a vessel. These things (referring to the recent sinking of the magnificent steamship, the *Titanic*, through the collision with an iceberg) take place sometimes that men may know that there is a Protector and that is God. If God protects man, if it be his will, a little ship sometimes escapes death, but if he shall rely solely on a ship, though it be the greatest, biggest ship, though it be well built, though the captain be the best captain, yet in a danger such as was present on the ocean it may not survive or escape, so that the people of the world may know that they must turn to the One who is the Protector. So that souls may rely upon the preservation of God and that they may know that he is the real Keeper. These events do sometimes occur for such reasons as those stated. They take place in order that man's faith may increase. . . .

But let no one imagine that these words should lead men to think that they must not be thorough in their undertakings. God has endowed man with intelligence, so that he may use his intelligence. Therefore, he must supply himself with all that science can offer. He must be most deliberate and most careful. He must be ever thorough in his undertakings. He must build a thing well, build the best ship that his ingenuity can lead him to, and employ the most skilled captain, but with all that let him rely upon God. Let him consider God as the One Keeper.

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O ye beloved of God! When the winds blow severely, rains fall fiercely, the lightning flashes, the thunder roars, the bolts descend and storms of trial become severe, grieve not; for after this storm, verily, the divine spring will arrive, the hills and fields will become verdant, the expanses of grain will joyfully wave, the earth will become covered with blossoms, the trees will be clothed with green garments and adorned with blossoms and fruits. Thus blessings become manifest in all countries. These favors are results of those storms and hurricanes.

The discerning man rejoiceth at the day of trials, his breast becometh dilated at the time of severe storms, his eyes become brightened when seeing the showers of rain and gusts of wind whereby trees are uprooted; because he foreseeth the result and the end,—the leaves, blossoms and fruits; while the ignorant person becometh troubled when he seeth a storm, is saddened when it raineth severely, is terrified by the thunder and trembleth at the surging of the waves which storm the shore.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**T**HERE was the true light that lighteth every man as he cometh into the world.

(John 1:9)

"I have placed in thee the essence of My Light: Therefore depend upon it." "My love is in thee: Seek and thou wilt find Me near."

(Bahá'u'lláh)

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In the world of existence there is nothing so important as spirit. Nothing is so essential as the spirit of man. The spirit of man is the most noble of phenomena. The spirit of man is the meeting between man and God. The spirit of man is the cause of human life. The spirit of man is the collective center of all virtues. The spirit of man is the cause of the illumination of this world. The world may be likened to the body and man may be likened to the spirit of the body, because the light of the world is this spirit. Man in the world is the life of the world, and the life of man is the spirit. The happiness of the world depends upon man, and the happiness of man is dependent upon the spirit.

The world may be likened to the lamp chimney, whereas man may be likened to the light itself. Man may be likened to the lamp, the spirit to the very light within the lamp. Therefore let us speak of this spirit.

The people of the world are divided into two classes. One class is the materialistic philosophers who deny the spirit and its immortality. The second class comprises the divine philosophers, the wise men of God, the wise illuminati. They believe in the spirit and its immortality. Some of the Greek philosophers declared man to consist of simply the material elements. These material elements compose the cellular elements of the human organism, and when this composition is subjected to disintegration, the life of man becomes extinct. They taught that other than the body there is no spirit. It is body and body only. From these elements these human emanations have come. To them the eye and the ear are due; by them the sense of taste, smell and touch are caused; and when these elements are decomposed, these senses are likewise decomposed. This is the statement of the materialistic philosophers.

But the philosophers of God say, No! the spirit does exist; the spirit is living and eternal. Because of the objections of the materialistic philosophers, therefore, the wise men of God have advanced rational proofs in regard to the validity of the spirit. The materialistic philosophers do not believe in the books of God, and, hence, for them traditional

proofs are no evidence; materialistic proofs are necessary. Consequently, the philosophers and wise men of God have said that it is firmly established that existing phenomena may be resolved into grades; that is to say, the mineral, vegetable or animal kingdom. When we look at the mineral we discover that it exists. . . . When we consider the vegetable we see that it possess the power of the mineral plus the power of growth. Therefore, it is evident that the vegetable kingdom is superior to the mineral. When we look at the animal kingdom we discover that the animal possess the powers of the vegetable and also those of the mineral. . . . It has in addition the sense of hearing, sight, taste, smell and touch, the five senses of perception. It likewise has the power of memory. These do not exist in the lower kingdoms.

Just as the animal is more noble than the vegetable and the mineral, so is man superior to the animal. When we look at the animal we see that, although it possess the five senses, it is bereft of ideation; that is to say, the animal is a captive of the world of nature, it is not in touch with that which lies beyond nature, it is bereft of spiritual susceptibilities, it is bereft of the attractions of conscience, it is not in touch with the world of God, it cannot deviate one hair's breadth from the law of nature. It is different with man. Man is possessed of the promptings of conscience; he has intelligence and perception, and is capable of discovering mysteries in the universe. All the human industries we see, all the



inventions and undertakings we observe are mysteries of nature and at one time were hidden; but the reality of man has discovered these mysteries. As a matter of fact, according to nature's laws, these things should be hidden and latent, but man having transcended the laws of nature, discovered these mysteries and brought them from the invisible state to the visible plane. See what a marvel man is! Consider electricity—one of the mysteries of creation. Under the requirement of natural law it should remain latent, but man discovered this power, brought it forth from the invisible state to the visible plane and utilized its energies. That is to say, man transcended this law of nature. How many of the mysteries of nature have been penetrated! Columbus, while in Spain, discovered America. Man is capable of discovering that the sun is stationary, while the earth revolves about it. The animal cannot do this. Man perceives the mirage is an illusion. This is beyond the power of the animal. The animal can only perceive through sense impressions, but cannot grasp intellectual realities. The animal cannot conceive of the power of thought. This is an intellectual matter and not limited to the senses. The animal cannot conceive of the fact that the earth is spherical. Intellectual phenomena are human powers. All creation is the captive of nature: it cannot deviate a hair's breadth from the laws established by nature. But man wrests the sword from nature's hand and uses it upon nature's head. For example, it is a requirement of nature that

man should be a dweller upon the earth, but the power of the human spirit transcends the law and he soars aloft in aeroplanes. This is contrary to the law and requirement of nature. He sails at high speed upon the ocean. He dives beneath its surface in submarines. He imprisons the voice in the phonograph. He communicates in the twinkling of an eye from the East to the West.

These are some of the things we know to be contrary to the law of nature. Man transcends nature's laws. The animal, the vegetable, the mineral cannot do this. This can only be done through the power of the spirit, because the spirit is the reality. But in the physical powers and senses man and the animal are partners. In fact, the animal is often superior to man in sense perception. For instance, the vision of some animals is exceedingly acute; the ear of the animal can detect a voice at a long distance. Consider the instinct of a dog; it is much greater than a man's. But although the animal shares with man all the physical virtues and senses, a spiritual power is bestowed upon man, of which the animal is devoid. This is proof that there is something in man which is absent in the animal; there is a faculty in man which is lacking in the animal. This is the spirit of man. All these wonderful accomplishments are due to the efficacy and penetration of the spirit of man. Were man bereft of this spirit, none of these accomplishments would have been possible. This is a proof that man is possessed of a spirit. This is evident as the sun at midday.

All creatures of material organization are limited to an image or form. That is to say, every created material being is possessed of one form. It cannot possess two forms at the same time. For example, a body may be triangular, spherical, square, a hexagon or an octagon, but it is impossible for a given object to be triangular and spherical simultaneously; it cannot possess two shapes at one time. It may be either triangular or square. If it is to become square it must first rid itself of the triangular shape. It is absolutely impossible for it to be square and triangular at the same time. That is to say, in the reality of the creatures the different forms cannot be simultaneously possessed. But in the reality of man all geometrical figures can be simultaneously conceived. In other realities one image must be forsaken in order that another might be possible. This is the law of change and transformation, and change and transformation are harbingers of mortality. Were it not for change and transformation in form, phenomena would be immortal, but because phenomena is subject to change and transformation from one figure or shape to another, it is mortal. But the reality of man is possessed of all virtues; he does not have to give up one image for another as other mere bodies do. Therefore in that reality there is no change and transformation; there it is immortal and everlasting. Verily the body of man may be in America but his spirit laboring and working in the far East, discovering, organizing and systematizing. Although governing, making laws, erecting a build-

ing in Russia, his body is still here in America. What is this power, which notwithstanding it is embodied in America, is still working in the East, organizing, systematizing, destroying, upbuilding? It is the spirit of man. This is irrefutable.

When you wish to reflect upon or consider a matter you consult something within you. You say, shall I do it or shall I not do it? Is it better to do this or abandon it? Whom do you consult? Who is within you deciding this question? Surely there is a distinct power, a distinct ego. Were it not distinct from your ego, you would not be consulting it. It is greater than the faculty of thought. It is your spirit which teaches you, which inspires and decides upon matters. Who is it that interrogates? Who is it that answers? There is no doubt that it is the spirit and that there is no change or transformation there, for it is not composed of composite elements; and anything that is not composed of elements is eternal. Change and transformation are peculiarities of composition. There is no change and transformation in the spirit. In proof of this the body may become weakened in its members. It may be dismembered or one of its members may be incapacitated. The whole body may be paralyzed and yet the mind, the spirit remains ever the same. The mind decides, the thought is perfect and yet the hand is withered, the feet have become useless, the spinal column is paralyzed, and there is no muscular movement at all, but the spirit is in the same status.

Dismember a healthy man:—the spirit is not dismembered. Amputate his feet; his spirit is there. He may become lame, the spirit is not affected. The spirit is ever the same; no change or transformation can you perceive, and because there is no change or transformation, it is everlasting and permanent.

Consider man while in the state of sleep; it is evident that all his parts and members are at a standstill, are functionless. His eye does not see, his ear does not hear, his feet and hands are motionless, but, nevertheless, he does see in the world of dreams, he does hear, he speaks, he walks, he may even fly in an aeroplane. Therefore it becomes evident that though the body be dead yet the spirit is permanent. Nay, the perceptions may be keener when man's body is asleep, the flight may be higher, the hearing may be better; all the functions are there and yet the body is at a standstill. Hence it is proof that there is a spirit in the man and in this spirit there is no distinction as to whether the body be asleep or absolutely dead and dependent. The spirit is not incapacitated by these conditions; it is not bereft of its existence, it is not bereft of its perfections. The proofs are many—innumerable.

These are all rational proofs. Nobody can deny them. As we have shown there is a spirit and that this spirit is permanent and everlasting, we must strive to learn of it. May you become informed of this spirit, hasten to render it divine, to have it become sanctified and holy, and that it may become

the very light of the world illumining the East and the West.

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There are five divisions of the spirit:

First: the vegetable spirit. . . .

After this is the animal spirit. . . .

The human spirit. . . .

The fourth degree of spirit is the heavenly spirit; it is the spirit of faith and the bounty of God. It comes from the breath of the Holy Spirit. . . .

The fifth is the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit is the mediator between God and his creatures. It is like a mirror facing the sun. As the pure mirror receives light from the sun and transmits this bounty to others, so the Holy Spirit is the mediator of the Holy Light from the Sun of Reality, which it gives to the sanctified realities. It is adorned with all the divine perfections. Every time it appears the world is renewed, and a new cycle is founded. The body of the world of humanity puts on a new garment. It can be compared to the spring; whenever it comes, the world passes from one condition to another. Through the advent of the season of spring the black earth and the fields and wildernesses will become verdant and blooming, and all sorts of flowers and sweet-scented herbs will grow; the trees will have new life, and new fruits will appear, and a new cycle is founded. The appearance of the Holy Spirit is like this. Whenever it appears, it renews the world of humanity and gives a new spirit to the human

realities; it arrays the world of existence in a praiseworthy garment, dispels the darkness of ignorance, and causes the radiation of the light of perfection.

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There is a wonderful power and strength which belongs to the human spirit, but it must receive confirmation from the Holy Spirit. . . . If it is aided by the bounty of the Holy Spirit, it will show great power, it will discover realities, it will be informed of the mysteries. Direct all the attention to the Holy Spirit, and call the attention of every soul to it. Then you will see wonderful signs. . . .

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. . . The human body is in need of material force, but the spirit has need of the Holy Spirit. Were it not for the protection of the Holy Spirit the human world would be extinguished. Jesus Christ declared, "Let the dead bury the dead." This statement indicates, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit," and it becomes manifest that the human spirit which is not protected beneath the Holy Spirit is dead. It is clear that the human spirit is in need of the resuscitation of the Holy Spirit, otherwise, though materially advanced, man cannot attain full and complete progress.

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The power of the Holy Spirit enlightening man's intelligence has enabled him to discover means of bending many natural laws to his will. He flies through the air, floats on the sea, and even moves under the waters. . . . The Holy Spirit will give to man greater powers than these if only he will strive after the things of the Spirit and endeavor to attune his heart to the divinely infinite love.

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The human spirit is a power which comprehends the realities of things. All that thou seest, such as arts, inventions, traces and discoveries were once in the realm of the unknown and were a hidden matter. But the human spirit discovered such hidden mysteries and brought them out of the sphere of the unknown into the world of visibility. For instance, the power of steam, photography, phonography, telegraphy and mathematical problems were all once hidden mysteries and unknown secrets. But the human spirit discovered such invisible mysteries and brought them from the hidden into the visible world. Consequently it is evident that the human spirit is a comprehensive energy and controls the realities of things and discovers the hidden secrets in the domain of the physical world. But the divine Spirit discovereth divine realities and cosmic mysteries in the realm of the divine world. I hope thou mayest attain to the divine Spirit, discover the mysteries of



the divine world and comprehend the secrets of the physical world.

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There are several kinds of light. First, there is the visible light of the sun by whose aid we can discern the beauties of the world around us. Without this we could see nothing. Nevertheless, though it is the function of this light to make things visible to us it cannot give us the power to see them or understand what their various charms may be, for this light has no intelligence, no consciousness.

It is the light of the intellect which gives us knowledge and understanding and without this light the physical eyes would be useless. The light of the intellect is . . . born of the Light divine. The light of the intellect enables us to understand and realize all that exists. But it is the divine Light alone which can give us sight for the invisible things and which enables us to see truths that will not be visible to the world for thousands of years hence. It was the divine Light which enabled the prophets to see 2000 years in advance what was going to take place. And today we see the realization of their vision. Thus it is this Light which we must strive to seek, for it is greater than any other.

By the help of this effulgent Light all the spiritual interpretation of the holy writings has been made plain, the hidden things of God's universe have be-

come manifest and we have been enabled to comprehend the divine purposes for man.

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The light is of four kinds: First, the light of the sun. . . . Second, the light of the eye. . . . Third, the light of the intellect. . . . Fourth, the light of guidance. This last is the supreme Light, the conscious reality which comprehends mysteries.

"Can this last ever be cognizable through the special senses, as the eye?" was asked.

"By the insight," 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered.

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Truth (the highest truth) is unattainable except through the favor of the Holy Spirit.

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The (Holy) Spirit is encompassing and surrounding all. It is holy. It is sanctified from attachment to a special place. It is present everywhere and at every time. It exists in all places, yet is placeless.

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The Christ is the central point of the Holy Spirit; he was born of the Holy Spirit; he was raised up of the Holy Spirit. . . . The focus of the rays of the Sun of Reality was Christ; and from this glorious focus the bounty of God was reflected upon the other mirrors which were the reality of the apostles. . . .

Jesus was the sun and his rays shone upon his disciples through his teachings.

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The Holy Spirit (in its completeness) is given only to the prophets; the people can possess but the rays of the Holy Spirit.

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The greatest power of the Holy Spirit exists in the divine Manifestations of the Truth (i.e., the greatest world-prophets like Christ). Through the power of the Spirit, the heavenly teachings have been brought into the world of humanity.

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When Christ appeared with those marvelous breaths of the Holy Spirit, the children of Israel said, "We are quite independent of him; we can do without him and follow Moses; we have a book and in it are found the teachings of God. What need therefore have we of this man?"

Christ said to them, "The book sufficeth you not." It is possible for a man to hold a book of medicine and say, "I have no need of a doctor, I will act according to the book. In it every disease is named, all symptoms are explained, the diagnosis of each ailment is completely written out and a prescription for each malady is furnished; therefore why do I need a doctor?"

This is sheer ignorance. A physician is needed to prescribe. Through his skill the principles of the book are correctly and effectively applied until the patient is restored to health. Christ was a heavenly physician. He brought spiritual health and healing into the world. Bahá'u'lláh is likewise a divine physician. He has revealed prescriptions for removing disease from the body-politic and has remedied human conditions by spiritual power.

Therefore mere knowledge is not sufficient for complete human attainment. The teachings of the holy books need a heavenly power and divine potency to carry them out. A house is not builded by mere acquaintance with the plans. Money must be forthcoming, volition is necessary to construct it, a carpenter must be employed in its erection. It is not enough to say, "The plan and purpose of this house are very good; I will live in it." There are no walls of protection, there is no roof of shelter in this mere statement. The house must be actually built before we can live in it.

Briefly, the teachings of the holy books need a divine potency to complete their accomplishment in human hearts. ( In Persia, Bahá'u'lláh reared and taught souls, established a bond of affiliation among various peoples and united divergent religious beliefs to such an extent that twenty thousand devoted ones sacrificed themselves for the Cause of God in the glorious unity of martyrdom. No differences whatever remained among these blessed souls; Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, Zoroastrians were

all blended, unified and agreed through the potency of his heavenly power—not by mere words, not by merely saying, “Unity is good and love is praiseworthy.”

Bahá'u'lláh not only proclaimed this unity and love; he established it. As a heavenly physician he not only gave prescriptions for these ailments of discord and hatred, but accomplished the actual healing. We may read in a medical book that a certain form of illness requires such and such a remedy. While this may be absolutely true, the remedy is useless unless there is volition and executive force to apply it. Every man in the king's army can give a command, but when the king speaks, it is carried out. This one, that one, may say, “Go conquer a country”; but when the king says, “Go!” the army advances. Therefore it is evident that the confirmation of the Holy Spirit and the impelling influence of a heavenly power are needed to accomplish the divine purpose in human hearts and conditions. Jesus Christ, single, solitary and alone, accomplished what all the kings of the earth could not have carried out. If all the kingdoms and nations of the world had combined to effect it they would have failed.

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There are certain means for its attainment by which mankind is regenerated and quickened with a new birth. This is the “second birth” mentioned in the heavenly books. Its accomplishment is through the efficacy of the water of life. This life

and quickening is the regeneration of the phenomenal world. After the coming of the spiritual springtime, the falling of the vernal showers, the shining of the Sun of Reality, the blowing of the breezes of perfection, all phenomena become imbued with the life of a new creation and are reformed in the process of a new genesis. Reflect upon the material springtime. When winter comes the trees are leafless, the fields and meadows withered, the flowers die away into dust-heaps. In prairie, mountain and garden no freshness lingers, no beauty is visible, no verdure is seen. Everything is clad in the robe of death. Wherever you look around you will find the expression of death and decay. But when the spring comes the showers descend, the sun floods the meadows and plains with light, you will observe creation clad in a new robe of expression. The showers have made the meadows green and verdant. The warm breezes have caused the trees to put on their garments of leaves. They have blossomed and soon will produce new, fresh and delightful fruits. Everything appears endowed with a newness of life, a new life and spirit are everywhere visible. The spring has resuscitated all phenomena and has adorned the earth with beauty as it willeth.

Even so is the springtime spiritual when it comes. When the holy, divine Manifestations or Prophets appear in the world a cycle of radiance, an age of mercy dawns. Everything is renewed. Minds, hearts and all human forces are reformed, perfections are quickened, sciences, discoveries and investi-

gations are stimulated afresh and everything appertaining to the virtues of the human world is revitalized. . . .

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The most important thing is that which comes through the Spirit—the breath of the Holy Spirit. The soul through the Spirit can realize the Kingdom. The soul can recognize and feel the love of God. Distance cannot prevent the receiving of spiritual bounties. Hills and mountains cannot check that. Why? Because there are no chains and bonds for the Spirit. The sun is very far,—in the highest position,—there is a great distance between the earth and sun, yet remoteness and distance cannot prevent its rays from shining.

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The Holy Spirit is the only power which will ultimately unite and harmonize the races and nations of the world. The Cause of God is the only panacea which will heal for all time to come the social, economic and political diseases of mankind. The revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is the tree which will send its outstretched branches to all the countries and under its cool shade all the religious sects will gather there to fraternize and associate with one another. The world is full of ideas but they are either fleeting or profitless or impractical or limited in their influence or confined within a narrow scope. The beaming shafts of the light of cosmic ideals must pierce

through the hearts of men and the power of the Holy Spirit is necessary to carry into execution these noble thoughts of the age. Human power is limited in its influence. It can unite two persons, or two tribes, or two communities, or at the utmost two nations. At the same time it confesses that this unity is temporal and may be abrogated by the whim of either of the high contracting parties.

But the divine power unites nations and peoples and cements them together in the bond of brotherhood and peace for ages and cycles. Christ was one person, without any worldly assistance and help, but through the effect of the Holy Spirit he was enabled to unite many nations and religions under the standard of Christianity. Likewise Mohammed unified the wild, savage tribes of Arabs and made them the conquerors of Asia. Consequently there must needs be divine power for the accomplishment of this universal aim. Human power fails in this undertaking.

The words of those souls who are the essences of severance, who are in the utmost sanctity and purity, will have an effect upon the hearts of men the result of which will be unity and good-fellowship. Save through this, ideal communication will not be made possible between the children of men. They may achieve a temporal union for a few years. Men may so compound the various ingredients as to be promiscuously mixed together. But there must needs be the solvent so that they may become perfectly blended and united. In the human world that solvent is the power of the Holy Spirit which will



thoroughly mix and blend the different constituents and elements representing the various nationalities, religions and sects. I hope the believers of God will unfurl the "World Peace Flag" because their aim is altruistic and they are helped by the confirmations of the Holy Spirit.

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Spiritual education consists in the inculcation of the ideals of divine morality and promotes high thoughts. This spiritual education is made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. As long as the breaths of the Holy Spirit do not display any influence, spiritual education is not obtained; whereas if a soul is inspired by the Holy Spirit he will be enabled to educate a nation.

Consider the records of bygone philosophers; the utmost that they could do was to educate themselves. The circle of their influence was very limited. All that they could do was to instruct a few pupils. Of such a type was the influence of Plato and Aristotle. These philosophers were only able to train a limited number of people. But those souls who are assisted by the breath of the Holy Spirit can educate a nation. The prophets of God were neither philosophers nor celebrated for their genius. Outwardly, they belonged to the common people, but as they were encircled with the all-comprehending power of the Holy Spirit they were thus enabled to impart a general education to all men. For instance, his holiness Christ and his holiness Mohammed were not

among the thinkers of the age neither were they counted great geniuses; but through the power of the Holy Spirit they were able to confer universal instruction upon many nations.

They illumined the world of morality. They laid the foundation of a spiritual sovereignty which is everlasting. It is the same with those souls who have entered the tabernacle of the Cause of God. Although not important in appearance, yet everyone is confirmed in stimulating the cause of general moral instruction. Therefore it has become evident that real spiritual universal education cannot be realized save through the breath of the Holy Spirit. Man must not look at his own capabilities, but think of the power of the Holy Spirit.

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This power is not verbal. It must be actual, demonstrative, dynamic. This power has gone out of the body of Islam. The Islamic world cannot grasp the principles of modern times and is devoid of spiritual potency. If they desire tremendous progress in as short a time as possible they must obtain spiritual potency, thus reforming and changing all the various branches of the institutional life. The western nations for the last five centuries have steadily been going forward and, with superhuman energy pushing further and further the frontiers of ignorance and illiteracy, they have attained to their present unassailable position. Now if the Islamic people start on this path with the same determina-

tion and constancy it will take them at least five centuries before they could reach the up-to-date level of western civilization. This is of course a slow process and, as I told you, they must attain to celestial power. Then you will observe their magical advancement.

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The power of the Holy Spirit is here for all.

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No philosophy, no system, has ever changed the manners and customs of the people for the better. The morals of the philosophers who are not enlightened by the divine Spirit are inferior. An ignorant man filled with the Holy Spirit, is powerful. He who is educated by the Holy Spirit can in his turn educate others in the same spirit.

The life and morals of a spiritual man are in themselves an education to others. Let your thoughts, words and actions bring life to those around you. Do not think of your own limitations; dream only of the welfare of the Kingdom of Abha. See the influence of Jesus Christ among his apostles, then consider their influence on others. These simple men were helped by the power of the Holy Spirit. So may you receive the divine assistance. Our capabilities are limited, but the help of the Kingdom of Abha is limitless. The earth of itself has no properties of life, but it is fertilized by the sun and the rain. The earth must not consider its own

limited power. Likewise may you be given life, may the rain of the divine mercy and the Sun of Truth make your gardens fruitful so that many beautiful flowers of exquisite fragrance and hue may blossom there in abundance.

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The captive of the Holy Spirit is exempt from every captivity.

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Verily, thy Lord will assist and inspire thee with the breath of the Holy Spirit and will cause thee to utter the proofs and principles of thy Lord with great penetration and confidence.

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Rest assured in the fact that the breath of the Holy Spirit will aid you,—provided no doubts obtain in your hearts. Know this for a certainty.

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When you breathe forth the breath of the Holy Spirit from your hearts into the world, commerce and politics will take care of themselves in perfect harmony. All arts and sciences will become revealed and the knowledge of God will be manifested. It is not your work but that of the Holy Spirit which you breathe forth through the Word. This is a fundamental truth.

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The withered and faded are refreshed, the joyless become happy, the extinct become enkindled and the lifeless are quickened with the breaths of the Holy Spirit.

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Pay no attention to things material but reach after the Spirit. Fix your eyes on the Sun of Truth for his light floods the whole earth. Let the sun give you of his strength then the clouds of prejudice will not hide his light from your eyes, then will the sun be without clouds for you. May we share in the divine bounties of the Kingdom. May the world be for you no obstacle hiding the Sun of Truth from your sight, as the human body of Christ hid his divinity from the people of his day.

May you receive the clear vision of the Holy Spirit so that your hearts may be illumined and see the Sun of Truth shining through all material clouds.

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The spiritual food is the principal food, . . . the effect of the spiritual food is eternal. The material food, that is, the food for the body, is simply water and bread, but the food for the intellect is knowledge and the food for the spirit is the significances of the heavenly words and the bounties of the Holy Spirit.

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The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are the breaths of the Holy Spirit which create men anew.

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The outpouring of the Holy Spirit changes the small acorn into an overshadowing tree and the showers of the heavenly clouds of mercy transform the black soil into a delectable rose-garden.

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The body of man is created for this world but his heart is made for the habitation of the Holy Spirit. . . . When you are plowing the ground or sowing the seeds or reaping the harvest let all your thoughts and sub-conscious thinking be of God. Your hands and feet will be working but your heart must be attached to the Almighty.

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In the work of the Kingdom of God one should not consider capacity or ability; the confirmation of the Spirit will descend, because the weakest souls through the confirmation of the Holy Spirit become the most powerful. Some souls who are outwardly ignorant through this gift become learned men. The weakest souls become the strongest. Many times a woman has surpassed a thousand men, or, rather, through this help can withstand all the people of the world.

Moses was apparently a shepherd but through the divine power he overcame Pharaoh and his armies. Likewise the disciples were the weakest souls but through the breath of the Holy Spirit and the assistance of the Kingdom of God they became the strongest ones. The thought which I wish to

convey to you is this,—you should not look at your capacity or ability, nay, rather rely upon the confirmation of the Holy Spirit,—do not doubt. (After a long pause.) Be confident and sure. It will help you.

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Upon calling 'Abdu'l-Bahá's attention to some French warships in the harbor of Alexandria, he said:

"I desire that you may see the divine ships. These ships are the blessed sails which are traversing the sea of divine mercy; their propellers are the powers of spiritual love and their captains are the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. No ship is ever wrecked in this sea; its waves are life-giving. Each one of the friends of God is like unto an ark of salvation. Each ark saves many souls from the storms of troubles. The signs and traces of these sails are never-ending and eternal. The future centuries and cycles are like the sea on the surface of which these arks glide blissfully toward their spiritual destination."

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Let us pray to God that the breath of the Holy Spirit may again give hope and refreshment to the people, awakening in them a desire to do the Will of God.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SPIRITUAL HEALING

**H**EALING comes from God. If the heavenly benediction be upon us while we are being healed then only can we be truly healed. All depends upon God. Medicine is merely an outward form or means by which we obtain heavenly healing. Without the heavenly benediction it is worth nothing. If man looks at the nature of the world around him he will see that all created beings are dependent upon something, i. e., man is dependent for his life upon the air which he breathes, likewise the animals which are upon the earth, and each created being is dependent for its life upon some material circumstances. Man, therefore, and all creatures are prisoners of nature. The sun must follow its law; the earth must follow its law of motion, and so also the sea. But by the spiritual power of God which, through his bounty, he has bestowed upon man alone, man is enabled to transcend the laws of nature in many and wonderful ways. It is the law of nature that man should walk upon the earth; but he transcends this law, for he sojourns upon the water and also flies like the bird through the air.

Through the wonderful spiritual power which God gives to man he is enabled to reach the Kingdom. But behold! man is not grateful and is care-



less of the great mercy which God has shown him.

O maid-servant of God, there are two kinds of disease, spiritual and physical. Physical diseases are cured by medicine and the essence of shrubs and plants. Diseases which are caused by the emotions of the mind are cured by the power of the spirit of man. But the power of the divine spirit dominates all the bodily ailments and those of the mind. When the spirit of man is confirmed and assisted by the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, then it will show its effect in every condition in the world of existence.

As to mental healing,—it also has an effect because some reflections are produced between the hearts by the power of concentration. From this power of concentration impressions are produced and healing or relief is realized from these impressions.

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Between material things and spiritual things there is a connection. The more healthful his body the greater will be the power of the spirit of man; the power of the intellect, the power of the memory, the power of reflection will then be greater.

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I hope thou wilt become as a rising light and obtain spiritual health; and spiritual health is conducive to physical health.

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Disease is of two kinds, material and spiritual. For instance, a cut on the hand—if you pray for the cut to be healed, and do not stop its bleeding, you will not do much good; this needs a material remedy.

Sometimes, if the nervous system is paralyzed through fear, a spiritual remedy is necessary. Madness, incurable otherwise, can be cured through prayer. . . . It often happens that sorrow makes one ill. That illness can be cured by spiritual means.

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O seeker for the truth! There are two ways of healing sickness, material means and spiritual means. The first way is through the use of medical remedies. The second consists in praying to God and in turning to him. Both means should be used and practiced. Illness caused by physical accident should be treated with medical remedies. Those which are due to spiritual causes disappear through spiritual means. Thus an illness caused by affliction, fear, nervous impressions, will be healed by spiritual rather than by physical treatment. Hence, both kinds of remedies should be considered. Moreover, they are not contradictory and you should accept the physical remedies as coming from the mercy and favor of God who has revealed and made manifest medical knowledge so that his servants may profit by this kind of treatment also. You should give equal attention to spiritual treatments for they produce marvelous effects. Now, if you wish to know the divine remedy

which will heal man from all sickness and will give him the health of the divine Kingdom know that it is the precepts and teachings of God. Guard them sacredly.

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O maid-servant of God! The prayers which were written for the purpose of healing are both for the spiritual and material healing. Therefore chant them for the spiritual and material healing. If healing is best for the patient surely it will be granted. For some who are sick, healing for them would only be the cause of other ills. Thus it is that wisdom does not decree the answer to some prayers.

O maid-servant of God! The power of the Holy Spirit heals both material and spiritual ills.

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It is not the body which feels pain or trouble, but the soul. If we have a pain in our arm the defect is in the body yet it is the soul which feels the pain and is troubled, not the body, though the body is the cause of that trouble.

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My spiritual health is always perfect. I enjoy an eternal health of the spirit. I hope all of the people of the world will win this celestial gift. Pray that the spiritual health of mankind may be improved daily, for there are many doctors who attend

to the physical ailments of the people, but there are very few divine physicians. It is in this connection that Christ said: "Do not be afraid of those people who have control over your body, but have fear of those who may control your spirit." Let your spirit be free so that it may soar toward the heights of sanctity. Let your spirit unfold the white wings of progress. Often physical sickness draws man nearer unto his Maker, suffers his heart to be made empty of all worldly desires until it becomes tender and sympathetic toward all sufferers and compassionate to all creatures. Although physical diseases cause man to suffer temporarily, yet they do not touch his spirit. Nay, rather, they contribute toward the divine purpose; that is, spiritual susceptibilities will be created in his heart.

O thou who art conscious! At last thou didst learn of salvation and didst find the straight way. Now remain firm that thou mayest attain confirmation and victory.

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The powers of the sympathetic nerve are neither entirely physical nor spiritual, but are between the two (systems). The nerve is connected with both. Its phenomena will be perfect when its spiritual and physical relations are normal.

When the material world and the divine world are co-related, when the hearts become heavenly and the aspirations grow pure and divine, perfect connection will take place. Then will its power produce a per-

fect manifestation. Physical and spiritual diseases will then receive absolute healing.

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Christ healed by the power of his word, because the word of the Messiah was the Holy Spirit purified from all else.

The words of many speakers are mixed with the lusts of their souls and their worldly appetites; therefore they will have neither authority nor success.

Jesus said: "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." He did not use prayers or mental suggestion. He used spiritual authority in the command which was the power of the Holy Spirit manifest in him. Therefore his word was obeyed because it was creative.

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As to the fact that man must entirely forget himself, by this is meant that he should arise in the mystery of sacrifice and that is the disappearance of mortal sentiments and the extinction of blamable morals which constitute the temporal gloom, and not that the physical health should be changed into weakness and debility.

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Looking after one's health is done with two intentions. Man may take good care of his body for the purpose of satisfying his personal wishes. Or,

he may look after his health with the good intention of serving humanity and of living long enough to perform his duty toward mankind. The latter is most commendable.

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If the health and well-being of the body be expended in the path of the Kingdom, this is very acceptable and praiseworthy; if it is expended for the benefit of the human world in general—even though it be for their material benefit and be a means of doing good—that is also acceptable. But if the health and welfare of man be spent in sensual desires, in a life on the animal plane and in devilish pursuits—then disease is better than such health; nay, death itself is preferable to such a life. If thou art desirous of health, wish thou health for serving the Kingdom. I hope that thou mayest attain a perfect insight, an inflexible resolution, complete health and spiritual and physical strength in order that thou mayest drink from the fountain of eternal life and be assisted by the spirit of divine confirmation.

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O thou who are supplicating unto God! I read thy precious letter and am informed of its contents, which show that thou art ill in body and weak, and indicates thine affection toward thy daughter who is in the age of youth.

I beseech God to ordain prosperity unto thee in this world, to confer favor upon thee in his supreme

Kingdom, and to heal thee from the illness which has befallen thee for some hidden reasons which no one knows save God. Verily, the will of God engages occasionally in some matter for which mankind is unable to find out the reason. The causes and reasons shall appear. Trust in God and confide in him, and resign thyself to the will of God. Verily, thy God is affectionate, compassionate and merciful. He will look at thee with the glances of the eye of mercifulness, will guard thee with the eye of bounty, and will cause his mercy to descend upon thee.

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I hope, as you have received physical health, you will receive your spiritual health. As the body will be cured of physical diseases, in the same way the spirit will be cured of all spiritual diseases. A cure of physical diseases is very easy, but the cure of spiritual disease is very difficult. If one has fever and you give him medicine, the fever will vanish; but if the spirit is afflicted with the disease of ignorance, it is difficult to remove that disease. For example, if the spiritual health is afflicted with the love of the world, spiritual medicines must be given. These medicines are the advices and commands of God, which will have effect upon it.

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For these thy prevailing diseases are not on account of sins, but they are to make thee detest this

world and know that there is no rest and composure in this temporal life.

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O thou who art attracted to God! May God uphold thee . . .; he who is filled with the love of Bahá', and forgets all things, the Holy Spirit will be heard from his lips and the spirit of life will fill his heart, the lights of the sign will shine forth from his face, words will issue from his mouth as strands of pearls, and all sickness and disease will be healed by the laying on of the hands.

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A friend interested in healing quoted the words of Bahá'u'lláh: "If one is sick, let him go to the greatest physician."

'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "There is but one power which heals—that is God. The state or condition through which healing takes place is the condition of the heart. By some this state is reached through pills, powders and physicians. By others through hygiene, fasting and prayer. By others through direct perception."

On another occasion 'Abdu'l-Bahá said with regard to the same subject: "All that we see around us is the work of mind. It is mind in the herb and in the mineral that acts on the human body and changes its condition."

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Turning the face toward God brings healing to the body, the mind and the soul. When this advancement toward God has become complete, one is able to overcome passion and desire, one becomes protected from sin and transgression and is delivered from heedlessness. This will bestow eternal life and will grant the imperishable gift.

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O my God, thy name is my healing, thy remembrance is my remedy, thy nearness is my hope, and thy love is my companion, thy mercy is my need and my aid in this world and in the worlds to come. Verily, thou art the giver, the all-knowing, the wise!  
(Bahá'u'lláh)

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O thou kind God! To me thou art kinder than myself, and thy love is more abundant and more ancient. Whenever I am reminded of thy bestowals I am made happy and hopeful. If I have been agitated I obtain ease of heart and soul. If I am sick, I gain eternal health. If I am disloyal, I become loyal. If I have been hopeless, I become hopeful. O thou Lord of the Kingdom! Cause thou the rejoicing of my heart; empower my weak spirit and strengthen my exhausted nerves. Illuminate thou my eyes; suffer my ears to become hearing, so that I may hearken to the music of the Kingdom and attain to the joy and happiness everlasting.

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ing. Verily, thou art the generous, the giver, the kind!

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Is there any remover of difficulties save God? Say: No!—Praise be to God! He is God! All are his servants and all are standing by his command.

(Báb)

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## CHAPTER IX

### PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

**M**ATERIAL affairs are of two kinds. The first kind are those concerns which have no direct relation to life. They contribute toward luxury, effeminacy, indolence. Indulgence in these things makes one negligent of God and stifles all traces of spirituality. The other kind are those affairs which contribute toward the maintenance of livelihood, adding to the comfort, happiness and progress of the human family. Spiritual powers come always to the assistance of such affairs,—they increase the moral insight and responsibility of man and add to his awareness and mindfulness.

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Man must live in contentment with the conditions of his time. He must not make himself the slave of any habit. He must eat a piece of stale bread with the same relish and enjoyment as the most sumptuous dinner. Contentment is real wealth. If one develops within himself the quality of contentment he will become independent. Contentment is the creator of happiness. When one is contented he

does not care either for riches or poverty. He lives above the influence of them and is indifferent to them. When we were in Bagdad, often with one pound of meat we served dinner to fifteen or twenty people. We cooked with it Persian stew and filled the pot with water so everyone could have a bowl of thin soup. Notwithstanding this we were all very happy and thought that ours was the most delicious dinner.

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How complex is the life of the present age and how much more complex we are making it daily! The needs of humanity seem never to come to an end. The more men accumulate the more they want. There is only one way of freedom and that is by shutting one's eyes and heart to all these things which distract the mind. The Arab of the desert teaches us a great lesson in the simple life. Living as he does in the waste Sahara he lacks all the means of life except a crude tent, a rug or mat, a caldron, a sword hanging to the inside pole of the tent and a javelin tied to the outside pole. This is all his furniture. Then, if he is wealthy he has a mare, or a horse, a few camels and maybe adjoining his tent a palm grove. It never occurs to his mind that there is anything else in this world. He is happy and has no worries. His food consists of a bowl of milk and a few dates and he may well wonder at the city man, how he can digest all the different kind of dishes with their flavors and spices. His thought is peace-

ful and serene, contrary to the city people who are always haunted by the nightmare of liveliness.

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Economy is the foundation of human prosperity. The spendthrift is always in trouble. Prodigality on the part of any person is an unpardonable sin. The fewer the habits, the better for the man. It is a divine virtue to be satisfied with very few things. Contentment is the antidote for all the social diseases. We must live an independent life. We must never live on others like a parasitic plant. Every person must have a profession, whether it be literary or manual, and must live a clean, manly, honest life, an example of purity to be imitated by others. Contentment is the master-key to all success. If the members of my family starve I will not ask money from the people. It is more kingly to be satisfied with a crust of stale bread than to enjoy a good dinner composed of many delicious dishes the money for which comes out of the pockets of others.

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Wealth becomes the cause of heedlessness to many souls with the exception of those who are believers in God and read the verses of God. For this reason Christ hath said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." But blessed is the

rich man whose wealth and opulence do not prevent him from turning his face toward God and whose heart is not attached to his possessions. Such a rich man is the light of the world.

Today Baron Rothschild came to Haifa. He is one of the wealthiest men of Europe. He is much interested in the Jewish colonization of Palestine and is devoting much of his time and attention to this problem. Now he has gone to Tiberias. He is busy all the time. He could not stay longer than one hour.

All the people are toiling and laboring to attain to the station of a rich man. Life to many rich men is nothing but a heavy burden. They are "wood carriers." Instead of a blessing wealth becomes a great calamity to them. The supervision of their colossal fortunes and their proper financial administration becomes the sole object of their lives. Day and night, asleep and awake, they think and work to make *their* piles larger and that of others smaller till finally they become mere money machines devoid of any other feeling or of higher emotions, wild-eyed, always hungering for more. Greed and selfishness become the dominant influences of their lives. Grab, grab, grab; right and left they grab at everything. In the mad rush and struggle for more lucre, for more worldly goods they walk over the bodies of the toilers and the children. They become the embodiment of heartlessness and cruelty. Pride and haughtiness lord it over them and they become mere tools in the hands of sordid, fiendish passion.

. . . Wealth has a tempting and drawing quality. It bewilders the sight of its charmed victims with showy appearances and draws them on and on to the edge of yawning chasms. It makes a person self-centered, self-occupied, forgetful of God and of holy things.

On the other hand there are souls who are the essence of existence; in their estimation wealth offers no attractions. If the doors of the heavenly blessings are opened before their faces, if they become the possessors of the riches of all the world, if the mountains of the earth turn into diamonds, if the oceans of the globe change into gold . . . their spiritual independence will undergo no change or alteration, their faith in God will increase, their mindfulness will augment, the heat of the fire of their love for true democracy and the education of mankind will burn away all barriers of ostentation and pride. Their intense passion for God will wax greater day by day. Such rich men are in reality the light-bearing stars of the heaven of mankind, because they have been tried and tested and have come out of the crucible as pure gold . . . unalloyed and unadulterated. With all the wealth of the world at their feet they are yet mindful of God and humanity, they spend their acquired riches for the dispelling of the darkness of ignorance and employ their treasures for the alleviation of the misery of the children of God. The light of such rich men will never grow dim and the tree of their generosity will grow in size and stature, producing fruits in all seasons.

Their every deed will be as an example for succeeding generations.

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It behooves thee to sever thyself from all desires save from thy Lord the Supreme, expecting no help or aid from any one in the universe, not even from thy father and children! Resign thyself to God. Content thyself with but little of this world's goods. Verily, economy is a great treasure. If any one of thy relatives oppress thee, complain not against him before the magistrates; rather, manifest magnificent patience during every calamity and hardship. Verily, thy Master is the Lord of faithfulness. Forgive and overlook the shortcomings which have appeared in that one—for the sake of love and affection. Know that nothing will benefit thee in this life save supplication and invocation unto God, service in his vineyard, and with a heart full of love to be in constant service unto him.

If thy daily living become difficult, soon God, thy Lord, will bestow upon thee that which will satisfy thee. Be patient in the time of affliction and trial, endure every difficulty and hardship with a dilated heart, attracted spirit and eloquent tongue in remembrance of the Merciful. Verily, this is the life of satisfaction, of spiritual existence, heavenly repose, divine benediction, and the celestial table. Soon the Lord will extenuate thy straightened circumstances, even in this world.

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Be not grieved on account of poverty, for true wealth is surging and inundating like unto the ocean.

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I cannot understand why people insist on the fact that one cannot give up a thing once he is accustomed to it. One can do it very easily if he makes up his mind fully, resolving to quit it forever. It is all a matter of character and determination.

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Man must be tireless in his effort. Once his effort is directed in the proper channel if he does not succeed today he will succeed tomorrow. Effort in itself is one of the noblest traits of human character. Devotion to one's calling, effort in its speedy execution, simplicity of spirit and steadfastness through all the ups and downs, these are the hall-marks of success. A person characterized with these attributes will gather the fruits of his labors and will win the happiness of the Kingdom.

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Cleanliness and sanctity in all conditions are characteristic of pure beings and necessities of free souls.

The primary perfection consists in cleanliness and sanctity and in purity from every defect. When man in all conditions is pure and immaculate he will become a center for the reflection of the manifest light. In all man's actions and conduct there must first be purity, then beauty and independence. The

channel must be cleansed before it can be filled with sweet water. The pure nostrils inhale the perfumes of the rose garden of bounty, the pure heart becomes the mirror of the beauty of truth. This is why in the heavenly books the divine counsels and commands have been compared to water. So, in the Koran it is said: "And we have caused a pure water to descend from heaven"; and in the Gospel, "Except a man has received the baptism of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Then it is evident that the divine teachings are the heavenly grace and the showers of the mercy of God which purify the hearts of men.

The meaning is in all conditions, cleanliness and sanctity, purity and delicacy exalt humanity and make the contingent beings progress.

Even when applied to physical things delicacy causes the attainment of spirituality, as it is established in the holy scriptures.

External cleanliness although it is but a physical thing has great influence upon spirituality. For example, although sound is but the vibration of the air which affects the typanum of the ear and although vibrations of the air are but an accident among the accidents which depend upon the air, deeply consider how the marvelous notes of a charming song influence the spirit! A wonderful song gives wings to the spirit and fills the heart with exaltation.

I return to the subject that the fact of having a pure and spotless body likewise exercises an influence upon the spirit of man. Now see how much purity

is approved in the court of God that it should be especially mentioned in the holy books of the prophets! So the holy books forbid the eating of any unclean things or the use of anything which is not pure. Certain prohibitions are absolute and imperative for all; he who commits that which is forbidden is detested by God and is excluded from the number of the elect. This applies to the things forbidden by an absolute prohibition, the perpetration of which is a grave sin; they are so vile that even to mention them is shameful. There are other forbidden things which do not cause an immediate evil and whose pernicious effect is only gradually produced. They are also abhorred, blamed and rejected by God but their prohibition is not recorded in an absolute way though cleanliness and sanctity, spotlessness and purity, the preservation of health and independence are required by these interdictions.

O friends of God, experience has shown how much the renouncing of tobacco, wine and opium gives health, strength and intellectual enjoyment, penetration of judgment and physical vigor. There exists today a tribe, the Druses, which refrains and abstains from tobacco, alcohol and opium and it completely excels all others in power, in bravery, in health, beauty and grace. A single one of these men can withstand ten men of other tribes and this has been universally proved. That is to say, generally, the individuals of this tribe are superior to the individuals of the other tribes.

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Regarding the use of liquors, according to the text of the Book of *Akdas*, both strong and light drinks are prohibited. The reason for this prohibition is that liquor leads the mind astray and is the cause of weakening the body. If alcohol were beneficial it would have been brought into the world by the divine creation and not by the effort of man. Whatever is beneficial for man exists in creation. Now it has been proven and established medically and scientifically that liquors are harmful. Therefore the meaning of that which is written in the tablets—"I have chosen for thee whatsoever is in the heavens and earth"—are those things which are according to the divine creation and not the things which are harmful. For instance, poison is one of the things: now how can we say that poisons are to be used habitually because God has created them for man? However, as to the spirituous liquors if prescribed by a doctor for the patient, and their use is necessary, then they may be used as directed.

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While looking from the window 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "We hear the murmur of the sea always continuing. It never ceases. Were it to cease the world would be dead, stagnant, lifeless. But the waves of the mind of man are far greater than those of the sea. They also are ceaseless. They never stop for one instant. This movement is good. If these waves of the mind are few the man is dull and quiet. What pearls and jewels are contained in the

depths of the sea! But the pearls and jewels hidden in the mind of man are the knowledge, virtues, capabilities, etc. These pearls can grow and increase in lustre forever but the pearls of the sea remain always the same. These waves from our minds go forth and create movement and thought in other minds. From one strong thought of love what great results may be produced."

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Profitless discussions fatigue and weary a person. People who call on me almost every day carry on a stream of profitless, unspiritual talk and I must listen to them with patience. We are commanded to associate with all the people. Today three persons called and they talked for one hour without any definite result.

Man's speech is the revealer of his heart. In whatever world the heart travels, man's conversation will revolve around that center. From his words you can understand in what world he is traveling, whether he is looking upward toward the realm of light or downward to the nether world, whether he is mindful or unaware, whether he is awake or asleep, whether he is alive or dead. For this reason Ali says: "Man is hidden behind his tongue. Out of the abundance of his heart does man speak."

There are persons with whom you associate and converse whose utterances are life-imparting, joy-giving. The withered and faded are refreshed, the joyless become happy, the extinct become enkindled

and the lifeless are quickened with the breaths of the Holy Spirit. The one drowned in the sea of hesitation and doubt is saved by the life-boat of certainty and assurance; the one attached to this material world becomes severed and the one steeped in blameworthy deeds is adorned with praiseworthy attributes. On the other hand there are some persons whose very respiration extinguishes the light of faith; whose conversation weakens firmness and steadfastness in the Cause of God; whose company diverts one's attention from the kingdom of Abha.

The souls who are rejoiced with the glad-tidings of God, attracted to the fragrances of holiness, severed from aught else save God, who are commemorating the name of God are withdrawn from the world of darkness, their thought permeated through and through with spiritual vibrations and their messages consisting of divine advices and exhortations; such souls are the manifestors of God's mercy, the educators of nations and the vivifiers of the world of humanity. They are guardian angels, the cause of human progress and the spiritual guides of the wandering children of men. Glory be unto them!

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If a person reads the *Hidden Words*, *The Ishrakat*, *Tajallayat*, *The Glad Tidings*, *The Words of Wisdom* and *The Tazarat* and lives in accord with one of these divine advices he shall reach to the station of perfection, he will become the center of

merciful susceptibilities, the dawning-place of human virtues and the rays of the Kingdom will become manifest from his face and character.

O ye friends of God! These advices and exhortations of the Blessed Perfection are revealed from the Supreme Pen in order to be considered as *guides for actions* and *not to be read only*. There are many people who read these tablets, praise their contents—but they do not *live* according to one of these words.

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Question: “Does the Bahá’i prohibition of gambling and lotteries forbid games of every description?”

‘Abdul-Bahá answered: “No, some games are innocent, and if pursued for pastime there is no harm. But there is danger that pastime may degenerate into waste of time. Waste of time is not acceptable in the Cause of God. But recreation which may improve the bodily powers, as exercise, is desirable.”

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Endeavor and make an effort that certain souls may be trained, of whom Christ said: “Ye shall know the tree by its fruits.” That is to say, every soul is known by (his) conduct, manners, words and deeds. Therefore, we must strive with life and heart that, day by day, our deeds may be better, our

conduct more beautiful and our forbearance greater. That is, to cultivate love for all the world, to attain beatific character.

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Ask thou of God that thou mayest attain to the age of maturity so that thou mayest recognize the beauty and ugliness of deeds and actions.

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Let the light of truth and honesty shine in your faces so that all may know that your word in business or pleasure may be a word to trust and to be sure of. Forget self and work for the whole. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that one must always remember that one is working for the world, not for a town or even a country, but as all are brothers so every country is as it were one's own. Above all, remember the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh about gossiping and talking about others. Stories repeated about others are never good, a silent tongue is always safest.

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Chastity and purity of life are the two divine standards of the spiritual and moral law. The greater the aim of man the nobler his purpose. A man must ever be thoughtful of others and be polite and courteous toward his fellow-beings. This will win for him the good pleasure of the Lord and the satisfaction of the general public. One's sitting and rising, speech and conversation, social intercourse



and communication should be based upon a firm foundation and be conducive to the glory of the world of humanity.

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Moderation is necessary in all affairs. Man must take a lesson from divine actions and deeds for God suffers a tree to grow a long time before it attains perfection. He is able to make a tree grow to fruition in an instant, but wisdom requires a gradual development.

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The first *Taraz*<sup>1</sup> and the first *Tajalli*<sup>2</sup> is that man should know his own self and know those things which lead to loftiness or to baseness, to shame or to honor, to affluence or to poverty. After man has realized his own being and become mature then for him wealth (or competence) is needed. If this wealth is acquired through a craft and profession it is approvable and worthy of praise to men of wisdom, especially to those servants (i. e., men) who arise to train the world and beautify the souls of nations.

(Words of Bahá'u'lláh)

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Be not grieved or sorrowful that no great wealth or property has been bestowed upon you. Look at the birds! The first thing in the morning they are

<sup>1</sup> *Taraz*, literally means ornament or an ornamented mantel.

<sup>2</sup> *Tajalli*, literally means splendor or light.

thirsty and hungry. They go to the spring and a few drops quench their thirst; then they pick up a few seeds and are perfectly satisfied and sit upon the branches and sing the praises of God. I hope you, too, will be satisfied.

Christ says that we are like the birds. The birds have habits; one is that they are satisfied with a few grains. They have neither property nor possessions, and they are most of the time on the branches of the trees singing their beautiful melodies. Now you should be satisfied with a few worldly things and spend most of the time in spreading the truths of the Word of God.

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The length and shortness of life is not considered important. Whether a man lives a few years or a hundred years, the purpose of his life is to achieve some definite results. If the tree of his life does not yield those luscious fruits, the purpose of his existence has not been accomplished even if he has lived many, many years. But if he has lived only a few years and the tree of his life has attained to fruition, he has obtained spiritual success. Consequently the duration of life is a conditional matter subject to the will of God. For example, this stone has existed 10,000 or 20,000 or 30,000 years but it has not advanced beyond the mineral kingdom. It has not achieved its final result. Again a merchant goes to his office every day in the year; he plans

commercial enterprises, undertakes vast schemes, organizes large companies but at the end of the year he has not gained any profit. On the other hand another merchant through one stroke of good luck gains large profits in one day. Now the former merchant, although he worked harder all through the year, did not achieve any success, while the latter although he worked only one day yet the outcome of his activity was prosperous.

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Christ has addressed the world, saying: "Be like unto children." That is, men must become pure in heart. The hearts of children are of the utmost purity. They contain no dust. But this is on account of weakness, not on account of strength. In the early period of childhood the hearts are pure; they have no hypocrisy nor stratagem and they cannot display any great intelligence.

But man becomes pure through the power of strength, through the power of intelligence and understanding. He becomes simple through the great power of reason. He becomes sincere through the power of intelligence not through the power of weakness. When man attains to the great state of perfection his heart becomes pure, his spirit becomes enlightened, his soul becomes tender and receives these qualities through great strength. This is the difference between the perfect man and the child. Both have the great, simple, underlying qualities.

But the child through the power of weakness and the man through the power of strength.

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Strive day and night and do whatever is possible that perchance you may wake the heedless, give sight to the blind, bring life to the dead, refresh the weary and bring those in despair and darkness to light and splendor. If the hope of man be limited to the material world what ultimate result is he working for? A man with even a little understanding must realize that he should live differently from the worms who hold to the earth in which they are finally buried. How can he be satisfied with this low degree? How can he find happiness there? My hope is that you may become freed from the material world and strive to understand the meaning of the heavenly world, the world of lasting qualities, the world of truth, the world of eternal kingliness so that your life may not be barren of result, for the life of the material man has no fruit of reality. But lasting results are produced by the heavenly existence.

If a man becomes touched with the divine spark, even though he be an outcast and oppressed, he will be happy, and his happiness cannot die.

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What must be the result of a human life? It is evident that the goal is not to eat, sleep, dress and repose on the couch of negligence. No, it is to find one's way to reality and understand the divine signs;

to receive wisdom from the Lord of Lords and to move steadily forward like a great sea.

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The religion of God reforms the moral side of the life of mankind. It is the spreader of the virtues of the world of humanity. It is the founder of divine perfections in the hearts of men. It is nearness to God. It is the cause of attraction and enkindlement with the fire of the love of God. It is conducive to the illumination of human consciousness. . . . All the prophets are sent by God for the guidance of the people, for the enlightenment of the minds of the inhabitants of the earth and for the promotion of the Word of Truth.

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To an artist, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

"Can you paint upon the page of the world the ideal pictures of the Supreme Concourse? The pictures which are in the ideal world are eternal. I desire you to become such an artist. Man can paint those ideal pictures upon the tablet of existence with the brush of deeds.

"The holy, divine Manifestations are all heavenly artists. Upon the canvas of creation, with the brush of their deeds and lives and actions they paint immortal pictures which cannot be found in any art museum of Europe or America. But you find the masterpieces of these spiritual artists in the hearts."

